

SMITH'S

MAGAZINE

LY 1919 20 CTS.



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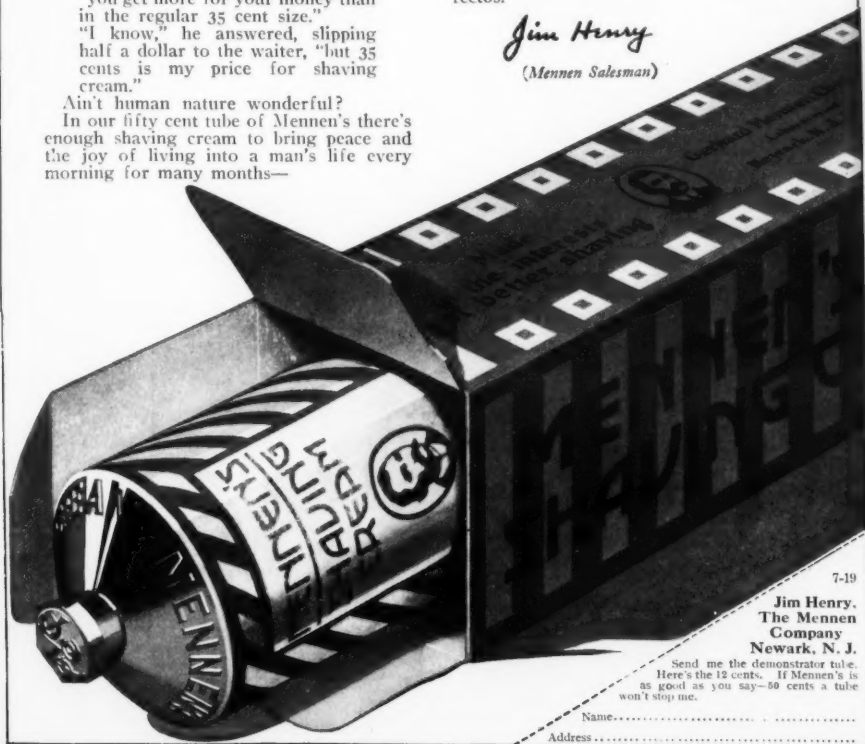
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Vol. XXIX

No. 4

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

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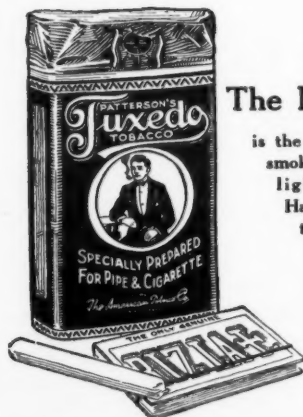
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 29

JULY, 1919

Number 4

The Tungsten Trail

By Leigh Gordon Giltner

Author of "The Circle," "The Game and the Candle," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

Married, to save an awkward situation, to a man whom she knew but little, Constance Craig found that she had been tricked into marrying another—a man whom she had never even met! Surely a predicament offering infinite possibilities! But it is a "true-love" story.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was a tense silence in the room when the dry, legal voice of the Kent family lawyer had finished the reading of Harbold Kent's last will and testament. That fateful final clause seemed to vibrate electrically in the atmosphere, though old Culbertson had enunciated it as unemotionally as the technicalities that had preceded it:

"And I hereby devise and direct that my elder son, Mark, shall hold in trust my younger son, Eric's, share of the estate until said Eric shall have reached the age of thirty. Meanwhile, a monthly allowance of two hundred dollars shall be paid said Eric. Further necessary sums—not to exceed five hundred dollars per annum—may be advanced at the discretion of said Mark, same to be charged against said Eric's portion of the estate."

The expressions registered on the two faces, so vividly alike, differed as radically as did the brothers themselves, in everything except the matter of personal appearance. Mark, capable and

efficient man of affairs, and Eric, drifter and wastrel, had heard the reading with palpably varied emotions. As he listened, Eric's expression had run the gamut of surprise, indignation, disappointment, and anger, while Mark's was eloquent, chiefly, of dismay. For the moment he was almost as resentful as Eric of an arrangement that must inevitably make him his brother's keeper and place him, however unwillingly, in the rôle of petty tyrant.

There were no other beneficiaries mentioned in the will. Shortly before his death, Kent had made deed of gift to his few immediate relatives, and to certain institutions he had helped to sustain, of such properties as he had set aside for their inheritance; and to each of his servants and trusted employees he had given, personally, a lump sum commensurate, in his judgment, with their terms of service and general deserts.

So only his sons and his solicitor, a repository of countless family secrets

and as safely impersonal as a letter file, were present to hear the brief, business-like setting forth of Harbold Kent's last wishes. Perhaps he had anticipated

an eruption on Eric's part, but that youth's final and dominant emotion seemed one of hurt at his father's implied lack of confidence.

Eric's faults were those of temperament rather than of temper. Light he was as thistledown, but devoid of perverse resentments or brooding sullenness. Mercurial of spirits, he liked the flaring, flaming, laughing nights along Broadway, where the pursuit of phantom pleasure was as frantic as some mad dervish dance; he reacted to the supercharged atmosphere of café and cabaret, with their blare of blatant, semibarbaric music; he thrilled



"Perhaps," he promised, "perhaps I can manage the necklace somehow later on."

to the passionate pulsation, the shimmering evanescence, of the hectic life of the illumined way; he kissed the hand of the surface-smiling city of the bejeweled coiffure and bedraggled skirts. He was half drunk with the wine of youth and the *joie de vivre*, but not yet drugged with the subtle absinth of vice. He had his quota of weaknesses and faults, but a lack of sportsmanship was not one of these.

So, though Culbertson also seemed to expect an outburst from him—for he glanced at him furtively and nervously wet his dry lips with his tongue, while silence lay heavy upon the formal, legal-looking apartment which so accurately expressed its owner's personality—when Eric at last spoke, he only said ruefully:

"Wonder why the governor tied me up like that? Maybe I look the part, but I'm not quite an imbecile."

"My dear Eric," soothed Culbertson, who had relievedly removed his eyeglasses and was polishing them on a silk handkerchief, parchment-tinted like its owner's countenance, "your late father, as I happen to know, rated your native cleverness rather high. But——" He paused expressively and coughed dryly behind his hand.

"Oh, I know I'm a spender," Eric admitted, "but why not, when one's got it to spend? Why deny ourselves any form of harmless pleasure when we own a gold mine like the plant, not to mention——"

"Quite so, Eric," agreed Culbertson pacifically. "But I submit that your father provided an ample allowance——"

"Ample?" scorned Eric indignantly. "It's a beggarly pittance! And to make me dependent on Mark for every dollar! Really I can't quite see——"

"Your brother," the lawyer ventured, "lives, I dare say, on perhaps half the amount your father set aside for your use."

"Oh, Mark!" shrugged the other.

"Mark's different. He's an ascetic. He's content to vegetate here in Kentland and spend his days—and often half his nights—in that dingy office at the plant. Praiseworthy, no doubt, but damned dry. I simply couldn't do it. I'm young and red-blooded and very much alive, and I can't and won't stand for the stagnation of this stupid manufacturing town! If I didn't run up to New York and hit the Tungsten Trail now and again, I'd explode!"

For the first time, Mark spoke:

"If you'd care to contest the will or try to have it set aside, I'll join you, Eric," he offered.

"Not a chance!" negated Eric. "In the first place, I don't think I could put it over—my record's against me. In the second, father made his fortune, and it's my idea that he had the right to dispose of it as he liked—whether I like it or not. I'll take my medicine, thank you."

He rose.

"That's all, Culbertson?" he asked, as he took up his hat and gloves; then, in answer to the lawyer's nod, "And enough, at that! Come along, Mark, I'll set you down at the plant, if you like."

At the curb without stood a graceful gray racer, as trimly built as a clipper yacht. Eric took the wheel, and Mark swung into the seat beside him.

"I'm sorry, Eric," Mark said gently, as the motor caught, and the gears clanged into first. "Sorry no end. I'd no idea father had anything like this in mind. But you needn't fret about finances. I've got to carry out the letter of father's wishes, of course, but there's no reason why I shouldn't personally share with you fifty-fifty."

Eric turned to stare at his senior.

"I wonder if I get that," he said rather dazedly. "You don't mean you'll divide your income——"

"Of course," Mark said simply. "I spend very little. There's only this to

consider: The plant isn't making as much as usual. The expense of production has increased and, as father instructed, I'm selling our output at a minimum profit."

"Just why? Couldn't you get practically your own price?"

"Undoubtedly. But father was dead against anything like that. His idea was that we couldn't take advantage of the Allies' necessity. They may be *our* allies soon, you know. We're sure to get into the fight sooner or later, I'm convinced."

Eric shrugged.

"Quixotic, I call it!"

"That's hardly the word. Suppose you try 'patriotic'—for, in my judgment, it's only a question of months till it's *our* war."

"Let it go at that," yawned Eric. "You may be right. I almost hope you are. I'd rather like to take a hand in the scrap."

"In any case," Mark assured him definitely, "I think I can always stake you. You're welcome to share—"

"You're a 'regular,' Mark!" Eric appreciated, cutting airily across the bow of a heavily loaded truck. "The best old scout alive! It's a bit galling, though, to have to ask you for every penny I spend."

"You won't need to ask, old man," Mark said quickly. "I don't use half my salary, and I probably shan't touch my income. Half of it's yours. I'll split with you on everything and arrange so you'll simply be credited—"

"Oh, I say, Mark!" the other protested. "I won't let you do that. I may want a loan now and then, but I can't—"

"Not a loan, Eric," the other said gravely, "not even a gift. Just share and share alike. You've luxurious tastes; I haven't. I'm an anchorite, if you like. So you needn't hesitate."

"Er—I think I'll call your bluff *pronto*, Mark," Eric said, with a little

embarrassed laugh. "You see, I—er—I'd like to run up to New York this afternoon on business and, as usual, I'm short. Yes, you're right," he frankly answered the other's unspoken question, though he flushed a trifle at the admission. "It's Lola, of course. I wonder," he mused, struck by a sudden thought, "I wonder if that affair could have influenced the governor?"

"It think it's probable," Mark said thoughtfully. "There are always busybodies to carry tales. Besides, father was pretty keen. He seldom let anything get by him, which, I suppose, was one reason for his success. He wasn't very strong for the Broadway stuff, I know, though he gave you a free hand. And really, Eric, old chap—Well, I won't preach. Only I wish that you—"

"Sometimes I do, too, Mark," the other admitted, with that boyish ingenuousness which made Eric Kent so hard to resist. "Lola's a leech—the typical stage siren. I'm not idiot enough to imagine she cares for me, except for the money she exploits me for; and I'm not sure that I ever cared greatly for her. Certainly I don't now. She rather bores me. I'd like to square her—and drop out. But sometimes it's easier to get into a thing like this than to get out."

The car drew up before the grim entrance to the vast munitions factory that represented the bulk of the Kent fortune and of which Mark had been for three years manager in effect as he was now in fact.

"Come in, and I'll write you a check," he invited.

Eric obeyed with alacrity.

Mark's secretary, sensing a probable discussion of private matters, effaced himself. Mark sat down at his desk, filled out a check, and handed it to his brother, who thanked him and, without glancing at it, stuffed it into his pocket.

He rose cautiously, tiptoed across the room, picked up the bag, and opened it. As his eye fell upon its contents, he smiled evilly. "Trying to hold out on me, eh?"



"Well, so long, old scout," he said cheerily. "Don't work too hard. See you Thursday at latest."

CHAPTER II.

Lola Brett, of the "Rosebud Garden"—winter variety—was reclining, smoking, on a *chaise longue* in the proverbial "bijou flat," when Eric, whose munificence provided the apartment, entered. Lola, who had histrionic ability of a sort—though her stage manager would never have admitted it—embraced him with an ardor inspired by the fact that her purse was, at the moment, annoyingly thin—to say nothing of the fact that Eric was now doubtless, by the terms of his father's will, acknowledged heir to half the vast Kent estate.

But something in Eric's manner gave her pause. She was, as he had said, the typical Broadway siren—pretty, volatile, and insatiably greedy. Born of humble East Side parents, she had used her brain to capitalize her beauty. The combination had secured for her a place in a cheap cabaret. There she had found a "friend," who had helped her to something better. Later, she had annexed another useful acquaintance, who knew the great and only Zeisler and whose influence and assistance had smoothed her pathway to the runway at the Garden.

But she had unfortunately acquired, meantime, an incubus—even the cleverest of women have their weaknesses—in the shape of a parasitic lover, her quondam dancing partner, who rejoiced in the name of Clyde Vance—or should have done so, since he had chosen it himself. Vance not only systematically exploited the silly maids and matrons whom he knew professionally, but occasionally "turned an honest penny," as he phrased it, by "picking up a trinket or two on the side." More than one portly dowager, vainly simulating vanished youth in futile caper-

ings on the floor of the crowded cabaret and willing to pay well for the privilege of dancing with the handsome professional entertainer, had missed—and hesitated to raise a hue and cry about it—some costly trifle which later had found its way to the hands of a trusty "fence" who obligingly helped Clyde dispose of his superfluous "presents" from his admirers.

But the dancing craze waned, and Clyde lost his job. He was beginning to be eyed a little askance on Broadway, and he found it difficult to secure another. He thought of utilizing his dexterity of hand in larger operations, but, with the cunning of the rat, he had the soul of a rabbit. He lacked the courage to become a high-class criminal and, being too lazy and too vicious for the straight and narrow, he became by easy stages the cheapest of cheap crooks. His nerve being inadequate to anything more dangerous than an occasional petty theft, more daring criminals found him useful in securing information and locating "jobs" for them to execute.

The revenue thus accruing enabled him to dress sufficiently well to gain admission to cabarets and tea rooms where he met, made love to, and borrowed from unsuspecting femininity. A "lounge lizard" *par excellence*, he made a profession of muleting foolish women of their money. Lola, in particular, turned over to him the major part of whatever she was able to extract from her several admirers. In return, he permitted her to lavish upon him a devotion that he made scant pretense of returning.

Both she and Clyde had looked forward to the time when Eric Kent should come into his inheritance. The belief that this time was at hand made Lola's azure eyes luminous and her smile exquisitely tender as she clung to the misguided youth whom Vance crassly dubbed their "meal ticket."

Eric, with true masculine bluntness, broke the spell.

"I'm afraid you don't get your pearls, Lola," he stated briefly. "Mark holds the purse strings now."

He had definitely decided not to mention the extent of Mark's generosity, partly as a test of her disinterestedness, partly from prudential reasons. He knew perfectly that Lola would have no scruples about exploiting Mark, as she had exploited him.

He was conscious of a secret, unconfessed hope that she might not meet the test. Already she had begun to tire him, and he would have been glad enough to cry quits, though an inherent generosity made him reluctant to take the initiative.

Lola's eyes narrowed.

"Just what do you mean, Eric?" she asked a trifle sharply.

He tossed his cap and gloves on the table and dropped into a chair.

"What I said. By the terms of the governor's will, my portion of his estate is to be held in trust for me by Mark until I'm thirty. Meantime, I'm allowed the princely sum of two hundred dollars per month, with an extra five hundred if I'm good and Mark sees fit to advance it. That's all."

Lola's face was a study in emotions. This was a sad blow to her hopes and plans. Four years is a long time, and men are proverbially fickle. She had counted upon being able to exploit Eric to the utmost when the estate was settled, and it was a distinct "check" to find that Mark, of whom Eric always spoke as an efficient automaton, had the auditing of his brother's expenditures. Something told her that such items as imported gowns, jewels, furs, and the rent of an expensive apartment would not meet his approval.

"But good old Mark has promised to come to the aid of the party," Eric was pursuing more cheerfully. "He's got to carry out the provisions of the

will—old Culbertson'll see to it that he does—but he offers to lend me, on his own, a hundred or so whenever I need it. Pretty decent of him, what?"

Lola's face brightened.

"Some brother!" she approved. "Then the will needn't put such a crimp in your bank account. It really won't make much difference, if you can touch Mark whenever you like."

"I'm afraid it will," mused Eric. "It's not a pleasant thing to feel oneself a pensioner, though, at that, Mark's rather a generous sort."

"Then," suggested Lola, reverting to the earlier issue, "why can't I have the pearls?"

"Because," Eric said rather shortly, "because I don't quite see myself spending another man's money on trinkets for you. If you aren't satisfied with what I can give you out of my little old two hundred per, I'm afraid everything's off."

"Don't ever think it!" protested Lola, alarmed, it being her policy never to lose a good thing until sure of something better. "Why, Eric, old scout, you don't suppose this makes any difference to me? Don't you know it's you I care for, not your coin? Let the darned pearls go hang! I don't give a hoot for 'em—or anything else, as long as you love your little Lola."

She laid her arms about his neck and leaned her cheek caressingly against his hair. Eric squirmed a little.

"Perhaps," he promised, "perhaps I can manage the necklace somehow later on."

"Can that!" she commanded, snuggling into his arms. "I tell you I don't want it. I guess," she added obviously enough—Lola was woefully lacking in subtlety and finesse—"if I were a grafter like the rest of the girls at the Garden, pearls would be no treat to me—or diamonds either. Old Ogden's hot on my trail, and I could play him for anything I wanted."

"Then perhaps you'd better let him —" Eric began curtly.

"Not me! Think I'd fall for that old gink? I'm not looking for a long-lost grandpa. Besides, dear boy, I'm pretty strong for you. Maybe you've noticed it. They say old Ogden's a good thing, but I don't want anything he's got to offer. I just want—you."

She melted toward him, lifting her face, with a certain effect of ingenuous sincerity, to him. Eric reacted to her charm. Lola was really seraphically pretty, if a trifle the *gamine*.

"Well, you've got me hard and fast,"



She was kneeling, when he saw her first, the light from a stained-glass window lending an ethereal quality to the beauty of her lifted face.

he assured her, with a half sigh for his own weakness, "so that's that."

CHAPTER III.

Leaving Lola's apartment, Eric came abruptly face to face, just without, with a slim, superlatively groomed, ferret-faced individual who somehow suggested to the expert eye the dancing professional. He moved with an exaggerated lightness and grace; his assurance was so absolute, his poise so perfect, as to suggest the stage or at least some form of personal exploitation.

Each arrested his steps to avoid a collision. Their eyes met and held, and each was instantly conscious of something subtly antagonistic in the other's personality and of a certain electric quality in the encounter. Though there were other apartments opening upon this corridor, and though he had absolutely no reason to connect the stranger in any degree with Lola, Eric was unaccountably perturbed. The other man, on his part, had instantly recognized Eric Kent, whom he regarded as his unconscious and involuntary benefactor, and he had no mind to jeopardize Lola's hold upon him by any stupid inadvertence.

So, quick-wittedly, he ran a bluff, passing straight on toward the apartment at the extreme end of the corridor. He was even prepared to go to the length of attempting to enter, its occupants being, fortunately, easy-going professional acquaintances of his and Lola's.

But Eric, reassured, passed on. Without glancing back, he ran down the stairs, got into his car, slammed into gear, stepped on the gas, and shot forward into the maze of swirling city traffic.

Waiting prudently until he had assured himself, by a cautious glance from a front window, that Eric was well on his way, Vance turned back the

length of the corridor and let himself into Lola's apartment.

Lola, who had returned to her couch and was smoking thoughtfully, vastly perplexed and disappointed by the turn Eric's affairs had taken, glanced up. With an ardor more genuine than that with which she had greeted his predecessor, she got to her feet and ran to meet him.

"H'lo, cutie!" she chirped, and would have kissed him, but that, with a bored air, he fended her off.

"Cut the soft stuff, old girl," he ordered curtly. "It gets on my nerves. Take it out on Kent if you must coo over somebody. It'll get you more."

Lola, not unaccustomed to rebuffs from Vance, merely shrugged.

"I'm not so darned sure about that," she said tartly. "The vein in a gold mine sometimes runs out, you know."

He had flung himself into a chair and lighted a cigarette. But something in her tone made him pause and glance up quickly.

"Just what do you mean by that?" he asked sharply. "Didn't Kent come across? I need spending money."

"So do I," she retorted, "and I'm not likely to get it in bunches after this. Kent's father threw him—hard. Left his share of the estate so that his brother holds it in trust till Eric's thirty. Eric's put on an allowance of two hundred dollars per. What's that to a chap like Eric? He'd blow twice that in a night. He's a good spender when he's got it. But hereafter he'll only have his allowance and what he can get out of Mark."

"Hell!" said Vance disgustedly. "That's a pretty note! I was counting on your marrying him as soon as he was on his own."

"Clyde!" There was genuine pain in the cry. "You don't mean that?"

"Why not? You aren't fool enough to think I thought of marrying you myself, are you? You've got to marry somebody before your looks go. They're

not the sort to last. In five years, you'll look like a wax doll that's had its face washed. And Zeisler likes new Janes in his ranks. About next season, he'll kick you out, and then where'll you be?"

"I thought you loved me," she protested piteously.

"Sure you did. So do lots of other poor fish. And what's that got to do with it, anyway? Wasn't I thinking of your good? But," he mused, "I'm not sure that you couldn't do better, as things have broken. But maybe we can get something out of him before you throw him. Couldn't we frame him somehow?"

"What's the good?" Lola queried rather wearily. "I tell you he's generous enough when he's got it, but two hundred won't pay his tailor bill. I've seen him tip a head waiter with a twenty—never less than ten. There's nothing cheap about Eric. But he'll be a pauper till he's thirty, and he won't be thirty for four years. Four years is a long time."

"You said something then." Vance lay back on the *chaise longue*, smoking and staring thoughtfully at the ceiling. "About this Mark chap, now?" he suggested.

"Nothing about him except that he's a poor fish that'd rather spend his time grubbing away at the plant in Kentland than hitting 'em up here on Broadway. Doesn't go in for the wine-woman-and-song stuff. Doesn't do anything but stick around that little factory town and pile up more coin."

"Good enough, if we had the spending of it."

"Which we haven't," she reminded him tartly.

Vance smoked in thoughtful silence.

"If anything should happen to Mark," he queried presently, "Eric would be sole heir?"

She nodded.

"That's right. Gee! If Eric only

had his share! Wouldn't I help him blow it!"

"Why doesn't he break the will?"

"Says he couldn't—and wouldn't if he could. I think he's right about the 'couldn't.' Everybody knows him for a Broadway speed boy, and a jury of small-town guys would vote that he'd got all that was coming to him—and more."

"I think," Vance vouchsafed reflectively, "I think I'll run down to Kentland—not far from this man's town, is it?—and have a look around."

"Better stay away from Kentland," Lola warned. "About the best you'd get there is disliked. Eric will loosen up to his limit—don't you fret. And maybe I can work old Ogden—"

"Much you'll get out of that old tightwad!" sneered Vance. "He'd squeeze a dollar till he compromised Columbia. Got anything else on hand?"

That Kendal cub and young Halsted—"

"Cheap skates, both of 'em. Couldn't blow you to a dinner at a red-ink joint in Greenwich. Better hold Kent on till we see what's next."

Lola glanced at the clock, then hurriedly rose.

"Guess I'll have to beat it," she yawned. "Didn't dream it was so late."

She disappeared into the next room. Vance, who, in his own vernacular, never "let anything get by him," had noticed that Lola's hand bag lay where she had left it, with her hat and coat, on a chair. He rose cautiously, tiptoed across the room, picked up the bag, and opened it. As his eye fell upon its contents, he smiled evilly.

"Trying to hold out on me, eh?"

He took out the plethoric roll of bills intuition told him Eric had left, riffled it hastily, peeled off two or three, put the rest back into the bag, and re-seated himself. When, fifteen minutes later, Lola, costumed for the street, returned, he was smoking placidly.



As he spoke, he took the key from the lock and laid it, casually, in her hand.

"Call a taxi for me, will you, Clyde?" she directed as she settled her hat.

"Taxi? Must be pretty flush, in spite of the slump in munitions stocks," he sneered.

"It's cheaper than a fine, I figure," she countered, pulling on her coat and taking up her wrist bag. She moved toward the door. "Coming?"

Vance rose lazily.

"Guess I'd as well," he yawned.

CHAPTER IV.

"The telephone, Mr. Eric, sir," Barnes, the efficient, mentioned for the second time. "You're wanted, if you please, sir."

Eric Kent, drowsing in a couch hammock on the piazza at Kent Manor, stirred slightly, opened his eyes, yawned, and presently sat up sleepily.

"Right, Barnes," he mumbled, reluctantly preparing to rise. "But," hopefully, "are you sure it isn't Mark that's wanted?"

"Sure, sir. Quite sure."

Eric rose lazily, languidly crossed the piazza, entered the library through a French window, and seated himself at the phone.

"This is Mrs. Schuyler Trask speaking," announced a crisp, cultured voice, which Eric recognized as that of one of his late father's friends, the owner of a country estate near Kentland. "Will you drive over and dine *en famille* with us to-morrow evening? I want you to meet my niece, Miss Craig. Of course it's entirely informal—I'm only asking you and Mark. Do you think we could persuade him to come?"

"I'm afraid you can't count on Mark. He's a hermit, you know. But I'll be charmed." His bored expression belied the words.

"Sorry about Mark. He's rather a favorite of mine."

"He'll be flattered. But he never goes anywhere—says he lacks the social instinct. He spends most of his evenings at the plant—finds his ledgers and order books more fascinating than the latest novel. And he's quite impervious to feminine charms—wherein we differ."

"Then I may count on you, Eric?"

"Delighted. Did you mention the hour?"

"I didn't," she regretted, "but we dine at seven."

Fate, at her loom, weaving fantastically the tapestry of time, gathers up, apparently at random, alien life threads and binds them together hard and fast in the imperishable warp and woof of the mystic fabric.

Eric, perfunctorily keeping his dinner engagement, had little prescience, and Mark, absorbed in weightier matters, had even less, of the influence Constance Craig's coming to Kentland was destined to exert upon their lives. Eric, always the connoisseur in femininity, instantly formulated Miss Craig as "rather a beauty, but not at all my type." Nevertheless, partly as a matter of courtesy to Mrs. Trask, partly because he was the perennial Romeo, and chiefly because the girl's indifference piqued him not a little, he devoted himself to her pleasure.

Constance, in turn, thought of Eric as a trifle, when she thought of him at all. She conveyed an impression of absolute detachment, accepting his attentions with a casualness that was a novelty in his experience. In her extreme preoccupation, she saw him vaguely like a figure in a dream. At the moment all men, save one, were to her like shadows; and Eric Kent, youthful, dashing, and tremendously good to look at, meant no more to her than the gray-haired rector who had christened her.

She had come to Kentland to recover her poise and perspective after a disillusioning experience which had left her without either. Her dream castles had crashed about her with a suddenness that had shocked and stunned her into a sort of atrophy from which, she realized, to rouse herself would mean only recurrent pain. All of which, could he have guessed it, might have had the effect of soothing Eric's slightly wounded masculine vanity.

Constance, who had made her début the previous autumn, had been one of the season's successes. Beautiful, bril-

liant, though too clever for pyrotechnic displays, gracious, generous, and above all possessed of that indefinable quality known as charm, she had, without apparent effort, attached hosts of admirers to her train. But no one of these had stirred her heart to a quickened beat until chance had thrown Eugene Sears in her way.

Sears had come from the East on business that brought him into touch with Constance's brother, to whom, also, he had brought letters of introduction. Standish Craig, accordingly, put Sears up at his club and later—finding him, as he phrased it, "a decent sort"—asked him to dinner at his home. Sears seemed instantly attracted by Constance, and Constance, for the first time, experienced a responsive thrill.

As the days passed, Sears, whether by accident or design, was much with Constance. They rode, danced, and golfed together, and though he made love by implication only, his eyes were eloquent. That sixth sense which every woman possessed made Constance aware of his feeling for her. The unspoken word trembled in the air; a magnetic current flowed between them; each word and glance was surcharged with emotion. Yet, strangely, he held silence.

Then—the tension snapped like the tautened string of a violin. Sears found himself alone one night with Constance in a setting Maxfield Parrish could not have bettered. Moon rays silvered the terrace; a fountain's lyric laughter blended with the sound of dance music etherealized by distance; a light breeze that was a winged perfume drifted up from the censors of dew-drenched blossoms in the formal garden below; the moon's white fire lent the girl's face an almost unearthly beauty; and Sears, being human, lost his head.

"I love you, love you, love you!" he heard himself babbling deliriously over and over.

Constance's dark eyes were luminous. "And I—love you!" she whispered tremulously.

He caught her to him raptly and kissed her until she lay faint and pale in his embrace.

"My darling, my darling!" he breathed, with lips close against her cheek. "All my life I seem to have been living up to—this!"

"And I," she confessed, "somehow knew, the moment I first saw you, that it would end in this. I've never before known any man to whom I felt I could give my life. But—love's changed all that. I'm willing, eager to—belong. When we're married—"

He started sharply; she felt his hold relax; her swift, questioning upward glance showed his face perturbed and a trifle pale, unless, perhaps, the moonbeams blanched it. But he quickly pulled himself together and forced a smile.

"I'm afraid I don't deserve you, dearest." His voice was a little unsteady. "I'm a pretty worthless sort, as you'll find out in time."

"You're the one man in the world for me," she said tenderly. "Isn't that enough?"

Something that was half oath, half groan escaped him. He turned away his face and sat for a long moment very still. Constance looked up at him in dismay. Had she somehow offended?

But when he turned back to her, there was the ghost of a whimsical smile on his lips.

"Dear little girl," he said gently, "I wonder if you really love me—*me* and not an idol of your own making? Haven't you, perhaps, used me as a sort of lay figure to drape with the fabric of dreams? I fancy it's like that, though you don't realize it—now. Perhaps you will some day."

"Why do you say that?" she cried, strangely chilled. "Why do you doubt me so?"



494 Constance, stumbling over the root of a tree, swayed forward and would have fallen but that pressed against the rough tweed of his Norfolk as he

"You're very young, Constance," he reminded, "and perhaps you don't quite know your own mind."

"But I do!" she protested vehemently. "Eugene, won't you believe me? I love you—you, dearest—with all there is of me! I shall always love you—till I die!"

She was very beautiful in her ear-

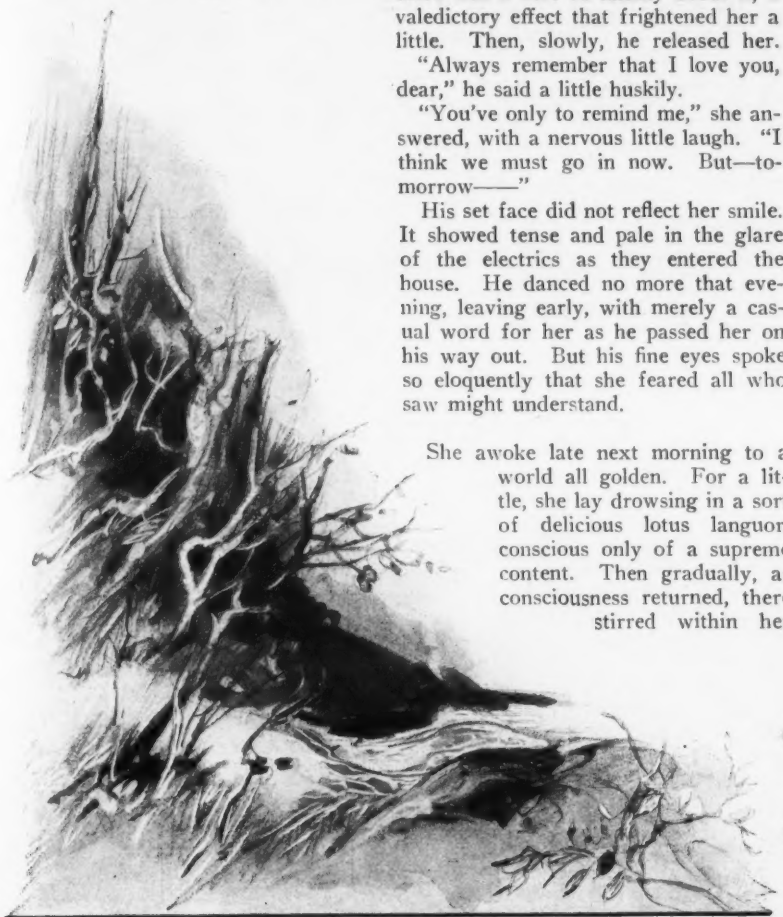
nestness, and Sears loved her with the best of a nature in which there was much of the worst. She felt his chest rise and fall with a long sigh as he held her to him. Then he bent and kissed her. Inexperienced as she was, the girl recognized a difference in the quality of this kiss. It lacked the fire and fervor of those that had preceded it; there was a sort of finality about it, a valedictory effect that frightened her a little. Then, slowly, he released her.

"Always remember that I love you, dear," he said a little huskily.

"You've only to remind me," she answered, with a nervous little laugh. "I think we must go in now. But—tomorrow——"

His set face did not reflect her smile. It showed tense and pale in the glare of the electric lights as they entered the house. He danced no more that evening, leaving early, with merely a casual word for her as he passed her on his way out. But his fine eyes spoke so eloquently that she feared all who saw might understand.

She awoke late next morning to a world all golden. For a little, she lay drowsing in a sort of delicious lotus languor, conscious only of a supreme content. Then gradually, as consciousness returned, there stirred within her



Mark caught her in his arms. For the merest fraction of an instant, she lay with her cheek held her. Then, with an effect of haste, he released her.

something that set her atremble and athrill. The memory of it all rushed over her in a delicious tide of sweetness. She loved and was beloved. Tomorrow— Why, it was to-morrow now! He would be coming soon. Perhaps, with a lover's eagerness, he was already riding toward her through the bland sweetness of the summer morning.

She scrambled out of bed and began to dress hastily. Then suddenly she became captious. She could find nothing airily dainty enough to express her mood. Her dark hair rioted away from her confining fingers, refusing rebelliously to "stay put;" her mirror showed her a little pale. Would he find her fair, as fair as she had seemed to him, perhaps, last night under the witching moon? The warm color flooded her face; her lips curved in an exquisite smile. She caught up a simple little morning gown—white, with touches of rose that matched her cheeks—and slipped into it swiftly. She coaxed her rebellious hair into semisubmission, dusted a powder puff lightly across her face, and ran lightly downstairs.

She had her coffee and rolls and went out on the piazza to wait. Surely he would be coming soon. She caught up a magazine, but she could not read. Her heart was singing.

The morning dragged by on leaden feet. Restless, she rose and went into the big, dim library. He was late, but he would be with her soon. She would scold him for a laggard in love— Ah, he was coming up the driveway! She could hear the beat of his horse's hoofs! With a throbbing heart, she fled up the stair to her room. He must not find her waiting. She would delay—well, perhaps, five minutes, before she descended, casually, to join him in the drawing-room below.

Some one tapped at her door. Her heart was beating so tumultuously that she could scarcely breathe. Her hands

were trembling and ice cold, but her cheeks were on fire. She sat down hastily before her dressing table and busied herself with a refractory lock that fell across her brow.

A maid proffered her a letter on a tray. Pouting a little, Constance took it. He might have come, instead of writing. Of course some stupid business engagement kept him, but what is a business engagement to a lover?

She tore open the sealed envelope, drew out the letter it contained, and held it for a moment against her lips. Then she unfolded it and read:

I had no right to tell you that I loved you, Constance, because I am not free. I am the husband of a woman I never loved and who cares nothing for me. Our marriage is worse than a mockery, but she is a Romanist, and her religion won't let her divorce me.

I hadn't meant to speak, but I lost my head last night. What a cad you must think me! My love for you is my sole excuse. I won't ask you to forgive me. I can't forgive myself. I'm going away this morning—can't trust myself to see you again. Good-by.

EUGENE.

The room was very still. The figure before the mirror did not stir. Presently the letter slipped from lax fingers and fell, with a faint rustle, to the floor. Constance started, like one waking from a trance. The face reflected in the mirror's depths shocked her with its strangeness.

An hour later, pale, but very calm, Constance—a new Constance, infinitely wiser and sadder than the radiant girl of the early morning—entered the library, where Mrs. Craig sat with her embroidery.

"I've changed my mind, mother," she said, with an admirable effect of casualness. "I think I'll accept Aunt Eli-nor's invitation, after all."

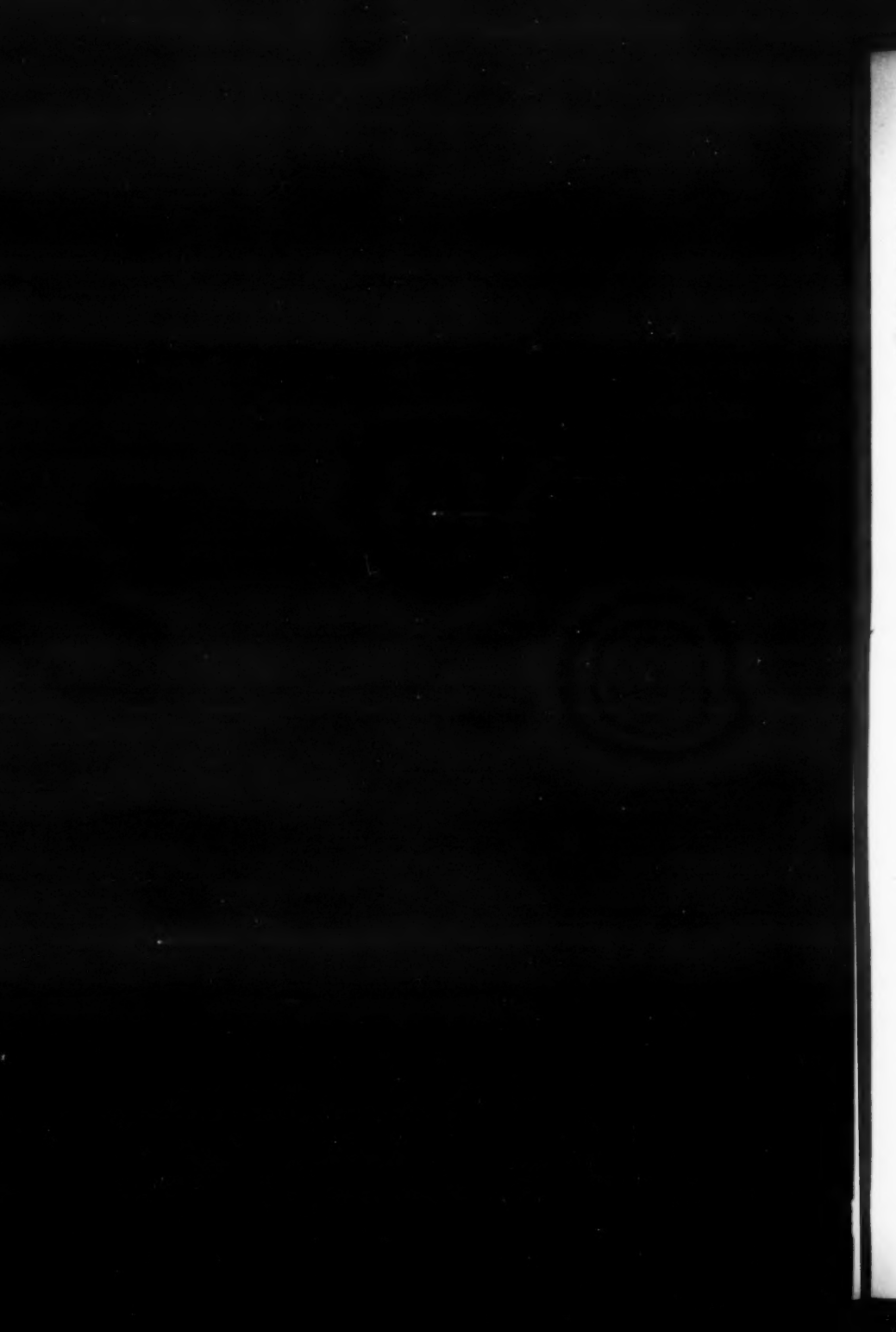
It was a part of the code of the Craig family never to intrude upon one another's reserves. Mrs. Craig did not permit herself to so much as look a question. Her mother's eye saw instantly

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the traces of one of youth's tragedies, none the less poignant because so ephemeral; but inherent tact had taught her that, at times, the wisest sympathy is seeming not to see.

"Go by all means, dear," she said heartily. "I'm sure Elinor will be delighted, and the change will do you good. When would you like to start?"

"This afternoon, I think," Constance answered steadily. "I'll wire Aunt Elinor from the station."

Thus wrought Fate, the weaver.

CHAPTER V.

Clyde Vance, less immaculately groomed than his wont, dressed in a last season's suit, half-worn shoes, and a hat that, while comparatively new, did not conform to the very latest mode, stepped off an afternoon train at Kentland's railway station. He had deliberately dressed the part and discarded his ultra-urban air, though he walked with a lightness and grace scarcely characteristic of the type of young mechanic he hoped to seem.

The porter of the Kentland House, the town's sole hostelry, approached, touched his cap, and took Vance's suitcase. Vance followed in his wake to the hotel, which stood less than a block from the station.

When the clerk at the Kentland pushed the register toward him and politely proffered an inked pen, Vance, for the fraction of an instant, was at a loss. He found it difficult to decide upon an alias and an address sufficiently convincing and noncommittal. But, after a scarcely perceptible hesitation, he wrote:

"James F. Maxon, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania."

The clerk, neither suspicious nor discriminating, glanced at the name, uttered an automatic "Front!" and directed:

"Two-seventy-three for Mr. Maxon, Sam."

An hour later, Vance was seated at a table in "Dick's Place," a saloon much frequented by the workmen of the Kentland Munitions Factory. Without seeming to do so, he scrutinized closely each newcomer. He was in quest of a tool, and he had a pretty definite idea as to what he wanted.

All sorts and conditions, all types and nationalities, were wont to gather at "Dick's," and from his table in a remote corner, Vance sent his ferret glance discreetly over the faces of the men grouped about the various tables or at the bar. Polak, Slav, Italian, German, Dane, and Swede—almost every Continental nationality was represented. Vance weighed each in a mental balance as he looked them over. There was no hurry; he must be sure of his man before he made any sort of move.

The tables about him filled; strange gutturals and liquid vowels filled the room. The air grew close and oppressive, and Vance, unaccustomed to fraternize with the rabble, grew impatient. One big "Hunky" rather interested him, but he looked a trifle too explosive for diplomatic approach. A mistake in one's choice of words might prove expensive and unpleasant. Vance, as the moments passed, began to fear that what he sought was not at that time available, and he was considering settling his score and departing when the door swung open to admit a newcomer.

He was unmistakably German, the typical gross, overfed Teuton of the lower class. A sullen discontent dominated the stolidity of his fat, florid face, and his dull eyes lowered. He entered alone, and no voice welcomed him; evidently he was not a favorite with his fellows. He glanced around for a seat. Seeing none except that at a table occupied by a stranger, he hesitated for a moment; then—the Teuton likes to consume his beer leisurely

and at his ease—he spoke surlily to Vance, who nodded assent. He dropped into the seat opposite and ordered.

Vance's heart throbbed with a sudden triumphant beat, proclaiming the newcomer "just the type I'm looking for!" But wisely he bided his time. He cleverly managed that the first advance should come from Becker, which chanced to be the name of his vis-à-vis. They fell into conversation, and presently Vance ventured to order a second stein for his new-found friend.

By means of the Socratic method, he learned from Becker that the work at the Kentland plant was difficult and dangerous and the pay not commensurate with the German's idea of what it should be. Vance sympathized discreetly. As some of his feminine victims could have testified, he had rather a way with him.

He soon succeeded in getting on terms with Becker, and when they separated, it was with the understanding that they would see each other at the same place the following night. The German was delighted to find an auditor for his grievances, his socialistic theories, his rhapsodies over his native land, and his bitter denunciation of his country's enemies.

To all this Vance listened with apparent sympathy and interest. In good time he, in turn, would pour into the other's mind the poison of bitterness and hate, with a definite and specific object.

CHAPTER V.

Mark Kent was not consciously the ascetic. He was certainly not a misogynist, yet women had played a very minor part in his life. Whereas, at college, Eric's fancy had lightly turned from one love to another, Mark had stuck steadily to the grind, apparently unconscious that fair feminine disturbers of the masculine peace existed.

Even as a lad, he had been animated by a conscious purpose. The Kentland Munitions Factory was the realization of his father's life dream. Mark meant that it should be his mission to amplify and perpetuate it. He lived and dreamed and thought in terms of the plant, and there was no turning aside after wandering fires.

Even before the death of Kent, senior, Mark had assumed active charge. The father had taken a degree of pride and pleasure in his elder son's ability and efficiency that almost offset his impatience with Eric's indolence. Eric was supposed to hold the position of assistant manager. As a matter of fact, Mark did the work, and Eric looked in airily for a few hours each day, drew his salary at the week's end, and nonchalantly absented himself whenever the mood took him—until his father, to whom lax business methods were an abomination, abolished the office.

"Frankly, Eric," he said to his younger son, "I'd rather pension you than be annoyed with your inefficiency. You set the other employees a bad example. You hamper Mark and irritate me. On the whole, I'd prefer to put you on an allowance until you find yourself, instead of keeping you on a salary you don't earn. I hope that, ultimately, you'll learn that life isn't all high-powered cars, champagne, and cabarets. Meantime, kindly clear out and cease to clutter up the works here at the factory."

Eric grinned.

"All right, sir," he answered cheerfully. "Suits me, provided the pension's large enough. I think I'd like to put in a year or two of intensive farming."

The elder man whirled in his swivel chair and stared, for a startled instant, at his son. Then he smiled rather grimly.

"Ah, I see. Wild oats, of course. Well, I hope you'll learn *pronto* that they're not a particularly profitable

crop. Close the door as you go out, son."

He turned back to his desk, and Eric knew that he considered the subject definitely disposed of.

Thereafter he went his primrose way, while Mark kept doggedly on at his work, animated always with the idea of making the plant a power supreme in the commercial world. And he was succeeding measurably, though his goal still lay far ahead.

People in general thought of Mark as "cold," "reserved," and "lacking contact," while Eric laughingly dubbed him "St. Anthony." But he was none of these things. Under a surface calm lay sleeping fires. He himself was conscious of an inner emotional intensity that, at moments, almost frightened him. And lately there had come to him a new and fairer dream than the vision of achievement, built upon a structure of steel and iron, which had hitherto animated him. He was haunted by the lilt of cadenced voices; he visioned elusive faces with half-veiled eyes and subtly smiling lips; his pulses thrilled to imagined fleeting contacts; bodiless creations of his own errant fancy filled the manor house where he and Eric lived with their father. The passing of that father blotted out, for a time, all these faëry visionings; sable-robed Sorrow stalked somberly through the big, empty house; life seemed suddenly to have lost its savor with the going out of it of the strong, splendid man, comrade as well as parent, who had been Mark's idol and ideal.

But as time passed, the visions softly stole back. Wooing voices, subtle smiles, secret glances, stirred his imaginings to a rapture almost poignant. Had he but guessed it, he was at last hearkening to the call eternal, as the woodland creatures hear and respond to the distant mating cry. Yet it was all impalpable, intangible, abso-

lutely abstract; until, on a day, fluttering, tantalizing unreality became suddenly concrete.

From his pew in the stately stone church which Harbold Kent had erected in Kentland as a memorial to his wife, Mark's glance chanced to stray to the Trask pew and to fall upon Constance Craig. She was kneeling, when he saw her first, the light from a stained-glass window lending an ethereal quality to the beauty of her lifted face. He had never clearly defined to himself the girl of all his dreams, but instantly he recognized her. Though he had never been able adequately to visualize her, she was as he had subconsciously known she would be. Vague visionings faded like mists before the keen, beautiful reality. There was not an instant's incertitude in his mind; he could have said with absolute conviction, before she rose from her knees: "That is she."

Throughout the service, which he followed automatically, he saw only Constance, who, absorbed in her devotions, did not observe him. He could not have described or defined her, except as a creature vivid, arrowy, and vital who had set ablaze, swift as flame through dry timber, the divine fire of love within him.

He could not know as, all that long, still, early-autumn afternoon, he sat and smoked and dreamed of her in the big, dim library at Kent Manor, that Constance, a few miles away, was sobbing out her heart for the man who, she told herself in the passionate pain of youth, had by his unworthiness stripped the world of glamour and made her own dreams dust.

CHAPTER VI.

Life, for Markham Kent, began to move with a swifter, more vital rhythm. For the first time within his recollection, his thoughts turned from the main object of his life. He lived and moved

and felt to a quicker measure; he arrived at a subtler apperception of the beautiful in all things visible and invisible; he found a new and exquisite quality in nature's simplest effect; his senses quickened to a strange new vibrance—and all because of a girl he did not know. Often, as he bent above a ledger or order sheet, he would find himself smiling a smile that had no relation to regulation shell cases or high explosives. Yet, though he schemed and contrived for occasional glimpses of her as the Trask car passed, he made no effort to resolve an exquisite abstraction into the crass reality of the concrete.

It was really almost a shock to him when, one morning on the street, he met Constance face to face. She was lovelier even than he had imagined her; her beauty was quite breath-taking. But somehow he felt unready for the personal encounter, which he would willingly have avoided. But, with a smile, she paused and held out her hand. Mark's heart skipped a beat. The slim, gloved fingers in his set his pulses tingling. He found himself incapable of speech. Fortunately she spared him the necessity.

"Why, I thought you were in New York!" Her voice was as charming as her face.

Mark realized instantly that she had mistaken him for Eric, and he as instantly decided not to embarrass her by making her aware of her error.

"Fortunately, I'm not," he found voice to say.

"I'm glad you decided to postpone it," she answered, flushing a little under the gaze that he found it impossible to drag away from her vivid face. "I was afraid you'd be tempted to stay on in the Big Town indefinitely, and forget about this evening."

"As if I could forget anything so pleasant!" Mark said, in his best imitation of Eric's manner. His voice was

a shade deeper than Eric's, but it had much the same quality.

Constance smiled as she moved toward the Trask limousine, which stood at the curb. Again his pulses thrilled as she laid her hand in his for a second at parting. He stood, hat in hand, staring after the vanishing car, until the curious glances of passers-by recalled him to himself.

He knew perfectly well that he need only ask to be presented, knew that Mrs. Trask genuinely liked him and would welcome him to her home—Eric had quite forgotten to mention her dinner invitation—but he had no desire to force Fate's hand. So sure was he that destiny was at work in his behalf that he was content to wait, lest by precipitancy he should somehow "lose his Eden." Fate, he appreciated, being a feminine divinity, must needs be coaxed and wooed, not rudely driven or coerced. So he waited and dreamed.

The morning following Mark's first meeting with Constance, Eric burst cyclonically into his brother's room, at an hour that, for Eric, was impossibly early.

Mark, settling his tie before the mirror, wheeled abruptly at sight of his junior's reflection. His face was drawn and pale, his usually immaculate attire looked disheveled, and he had palpably not slept.

"Look here, Mark!" he began. Barnes, brushing his master's coat in the background, effaced himself at a glance from Mark. "I'm in no end of a mess! You've got to help me out!"

"Of course," answered Mark simply. "If you'll tell me how——"

"That's the deuce of it. I don't know. There doesn't seem to be any way out. Yet I simply can't go through." He sank into a chair and dropped his head on his hands.

"It's Lola, of course," Mark affirmed rather than asked. "I'll be glad to let you have whatever amount——"

Eric shook his head, looking up at his brother with a stricken face.

"Nothing like that, Mark. It's a different—and more serious—thing. It was purely an accident. It all happened so suddenly—I'm still a bit dazed. I've been in all sorts of scrapes and pulled out neatly when I deserved to be shot. But this time, though perfectly innocent even in intention, I've got the limit. I can't quite seem to figure out the why of it or what's to be done."

"If you'll give me the details——" Mark suggested.

"Briefly, it's just this. I'm supposed to be married to-night to a girl whom I hardly know and who doesn't care a hang for me. And if I go through, as I've got to for the sake of her reputation, Lola will raise merry Hades. She's warned me repeatedly as to what she'd do if my engagement were ever announced. It means blackmail, scandal, newspaper notoriety, and other pleasant things."

He paused for a moment, to get hold of himself, then went on dully:

"It's that handsome Miss Craig who's staying with Mrs. Trask." Mark's face suddenly went death white, but Eric, in his absorption, did not notice. "We were out in the car and ran out of gas. It was pretty late—we'd had a puncture that delayed us—and I'd somehow got on the wrong road. I turned in the nearest gate at a venture. Luckily the car stalled halfway up the drive, and I went on on foot, for, of all places on earth, it happened to be—Kelly's."

"Kelly's?" Mark echoed. "Not——" Eric nodded.

"Yes. The road house—about the worst joint in the State. We got away as soon as we could, but as my car turned out of the gate, the lights of another car fell full upon our faces. And in that car were Jack Ward and Horace Foster."

"They recognized Miss Craig, you think?"

Again Eric nodded miserably.

"Of course. I saw them exchange glances. There was only one thing for them to think. Ward's a decent chap, and I don't think he'll talk, but that little bouncer Foster will spread it far and wide. I can't see why they had to pass at that exact moment! Just my rotten luck!"

Mark did not speak.

"The girl's such a thoroughbred," Eric went on wretchedly, "fine old Southern family, lofty traditions, and all that, and I know how that little beast will talk. So I did what seemed to me the only thing to do. I asked her to marry me right off the reel—wanted her to drive with me to Roseboro and get it over at once. Lucky thing she didn't take me up, for since I've thought things over, I realize I can't marry her. I don't dare take the chance."

The older brother's face was set and stern.

"But, Eric, don't you see that you've got to? However innocently, you've compromised Miss Craig, and you simply can't fail her."

"It's not my fault," protested Eric sullenly. "We were simply victims of circumstance. Oh, I know nobody'll believe that. I caught the odious leer on little Foster's face—and there'll be more like it. It's pretty hard on Miss Craig, but I don't want to marry her. I don't want to marry anybody. Lola'd kick up an awful shindy if I did."

"But, Eric——"

"Of course it's the chivalrous thing to do, but I'm no movie hero, and rescuing damsels in distress is out of my line. I don't care for Constance Craig nor she for me. This thing will blow over and be forgotten, and I don't see why I should let myself be led as a lamb to the altar for the sake of an abstract principle."

"It strikes me as pretty concrete, Eric. Ward and Foster saw you leaving Kelly's road house with Miss Craig, and whether they talk or not, each doubtless made the obvious inference. While, of course, you weren't to blame in the matter, it's a case of *noblesse oblige*." The girl's position is pretty awkward, and you simply can't back out and leave her to face the scandal. Eric, old chap, you surely don't mean you won't marry her?"

"That's exactly what I'm trying to tell you. I'm not going through with this marriage thing. If it comes to a show-down, I'll hike for Canada and enlist in the Flying Corps first. And this being so, what are you going to do about it?"

Mark faced his brother steadily. The likeness between the two tense faces was startling.

"Just this," he said evenly. "I'm going to marry her myself."

Eric gasped.

"You?" he exploded. "Mark, have you taken leave of your senses? Why, you don't know Miss Craig! You've never even seen her!"

"You're mistaken," the other said quietly. "But that has nothing to do with the case."

Eric laughed shortly.

"I should say it had a good deal."

"If you mean what you say, Eric," Mark said, still very quietly, "if you've definitely decided not to marry Miss Craig, I will."

"Has it chanced to occur to you," Eric suggested, "that she mightn't be willing to marry a man she's never met, even to save her precious family name?"

Mark Kent caught his brother's arm and swung him to his side before a tall pier glass had hung at the top of the room. The likeness between the brothers was remarkable. Mark was two years the elder, but he did not look it. Eyes, hair, and complexion were

the same, both men carried themselves with the same lithe erectness and were much of a size, though Mark was a trifle taller and slightly thinner. The chief and only disparity was a subtle difference in expression and manner.

"You mean"—Eric gaped uncertainly—"that you're planning to under-study me?"

"Until after the wedding. Then I'll tell her the truth and leave it up to her. Just how well do you know her?"

"Why, I've called half a dozen times since she came here—about a month ago—and taken her out in the car perhaps as often. That's the extent of it. This marriage thing was thrust upon me."

"You let her understand that? I've got to know, you see, so I can play up properly."

"Of course I didn't," Eric denied. "My art sense wouldn't permit it. I've a pretty fair technique in the love game, you know, and I tried to do the thing gracefully. I couldn't just blurt out, 'Will you marry me to avert a scandal?' Now could I?"

"No, I suppose not," Mark said thoughtfully. "But it rather complicates matters."

"I don't see why. But see here, Mark, don't make an idiot of yourself with this chivalry stuff! You don't want to marry any more than I do. Why should you handicap yourself with a wife you don't want?"

"You're quite sure of that last?"

"Well, rather, since you've never even met her. It's no end decent of you to come to the rescue, though I'm not sure she wouldn't resent it if she knew we'd switched suits on her, so to speak. She's rather a spirited sort."

"She probably won't be pleased when she learns the facts," Mark conceded. "But, again, that isn't the point. Those men very possibly didn't know which of us two it was with her last night——"



"Do you know, Eric, you haven't—kissed me—since the morning of our wedding day?"

"You bet they knew!" Eric interposed with conviction. "It's quite in character for me to be seen at Kelly's, but you could prove an alibi on your reputation."

"At that," said Mark thoughtfully, "she'll have the protection of my name. And if I marry her, won't Ward and Foster accept it as proof—"

"They will, I suppose," Eric admitted. "But, I say, Mark, don't be quixotic! It isn't up to you. Don't sacrifice yourself."

"I shouldn't call it that. But we're wasting time. Outline your plans for me, and we'll make the necessary arrangements. By the bye, where were you figuring on spending the honeymoon?"

Eric smiled.

"Why, frankly, Mark, I was thinking of borrowing your shooting box for the occasion. My idea was that we should be married by a magistrate at six this evening and then motor up to the shack for a fortnight."

"Good enough!" Mark approved. "I'll send Barnes out at once to get things in shape. We'll get the license as soon as we've had breakfast. I suppose you can furnish the necessary data? I'm not up on my bride's antecedents, you know."

"Mark, won't you reconsider? Won't you stow this crazy stunt?"

"On one condition, Eric."

Eric set his lips.

"You can count me out."

"Very well, then. Come along."

"I'm sorry, old man."

Mark smiled.

"You needn't be. I'm not sympathizing with myself to any great extent."

"You really don't mind?"

Again Mark smiled.

"Not seriously. You see, Eric—I—er— Don't worry about me, old scout. It's quite all right."

CHAPTER VIII.

Vance found his work cut out for him to ingratiate himself with Becker without arousing that worthy's ever-ready suspicion. Chris Becker, though the typical stolid, stupid, wooden-headed Teuton, possessed a certain low cunning and an unreasoning stubbornness which made him difficult to handle. All Vance's tact was called into requisition, and he sometimes despaired of bending his recalcitrant tool to his will.

He did not care to be seen too much in Becker's company, in view of what he hoped might eventuate, but it was necessary that he should have opportunity to gain his confidence and acquire an influence over him—all of which required time and tact. So he managed that Becker should believe it was his own suggestion that Vance should drop in at his room one evening. This was the opening wedge Vance had been waiting for. There he could talk without fear of interruption or eavesdroppers.

Fortunately for Vance's plans, Becker was a widower, whose two married daughters lived in a distant city. He boarded with a German family who had not been long in America and whose members spoke little English. Hence Vance felt he could speak with comparative freedom.

Vance, though of humble origin, had managed, since he had arrived at years of discretion, to live in a certain degree of luxury. There had always been some one to smooth his path for him; foolish women lavished their largess upon him, and he was usually able to gratify the expensive tastes he had acquired. He dressed with meticulous care, he was something of an epicure, he smoked a special brand of monogrammed Egyptian cigarettes, and was a connoisseur in wines.

Becker's grossness and the close, unkempt little room in which he lived revolted the dancer, but for the sake of his purpose, which grew more definite as he recognized the extent of the Kent fortune, he choked down his disgust, endured Becker's foul pipe, while he smoked his perfumed cigarette, sympathized with his grievances, and strove, by imperceptible degrees, to turn the current of his sullen discontent into certain channels. All this very carefully and with a fine discretion and diplomacy.

"Your boss," he finally felt the time ripe to say, "is the friend of your country's enemies, Becker. He sells them, almost at cost, the munitions you help to make."

"*Ja wohl!*" assented the Teuton truculently. "Dot iss so." Then under his breath: "*Der verdammté schwein-hund!*"

"Now his brother is a different sort," Vance went on smoothly. "He's a spender—out for all he can get. He'd try his hand at profiteering if he had charge of the plant. If his brother were out of the way——"

"Ja," again Becker agreed. "If somet'ings happen by dis Mark, der bruder, he iss der boss."

"And the brother's a mighty different proposition. Why, man, he's easy! I don't doubt but that, if approached in the right way, he'd show a friendly spirit toward your government. Your representatives have the coin to pay for what they want, and Eric Kent, unless I miss my guess, is the man to take it. But Mark—why, Becker, he's strongly and openly pro-Ally. If the States should enter the war—and it looks that way, at present—he'd promptly turn over the plant to the government. As it is, he's a power for harm to your country."

Unconsciously Vance had overreached himself. At the back of Becker's slow-working brain, an idea was gradually taking shape. But he cunningly kept it to himself. The cumulative effect of Vance's apparently casual allusions to the plant as a hostile force was not quite what he had planned. But Becker was shrewd enough to dissemble.

"Schwein!" he ejaculated again, his fat face red with smoldering fires of hate.

"If, as you say, something should happen to him——" Vance suggested. Becker nodded thoughtfully.

"Somet'ings might," he said cryptically. "At der plant, dere effer iss danger. An' der boss, he vork late alone in der office, all times. An egspllosion——"

"Explosions are expensive," cautioned Vance, alarmed, "and the plant is too valuable to be damaged."

"Aber ja."

"Automobiles," observed Vance musingly, "are dangerous things. And the boss drives his own car."

"Danger, it iss efferwhere," agreed Becker cryptically.

"I'm informed," pursued Vance, still quite casually, "that there are men in

this country with large sums of money to be paid over to those who serve the fatherland. Of course, not every one has the chance. But if a man gets the chance—and takes it—I'm told he is rewarded. The Kentland plant turns out a vast amount of munitions; the plant's boss is with the Allies heart and soul. If, for example, he should —er—meet with some accident, who would profit? Your people. And would not your emperor, your countrymen, be grateful if——" Vance paused to let the idea sink in.

Becker mused, his fat chin sunk deep in the collar of his flannel shirt. Vance, he knew, was right. Becker was aware, as were thousands of others of his type, of the vast network of intrigue thrown about a neutral and unsuspecting country by the secret agents of a foreign power. That there was money in large amounts to be had for such trifling activities as espionage, arson, and destruction of property, dignified by the exalted name of patriotic service, he knew beyond peradventure. He smiled inwardly as he thought of the larger inclusions of the plan shaping itself in his mind even as Vance spoke. The poisoned arrows Vance had been daily planting in the other's consciousness had gone deeper than he guessed.

"If Kent's car should go wrong, for instance—the mechanism of a machine is so easily thrown out of adjustment—or if, some night when he's working late at the plant, something should happen——" Vance said musingly. "As you've said, Becker, there's danger everywhere for all of us. Accidents will occur. Deplorable, but true."

"It iss true, mein frient," Becker said slowly, as if thinking aloud. "Ach, Gott, dese so derrible accidents! Would it not be sad if so goot a frient of France und England should some morning be found deadt at his desk? Yet might it not be so? Ach, yes!"

Vance listened raptly.

"Such things have happened, Becker," he said, rising. "With such a large number of employees, the boss is bound to have some enemy who might bump him off if the opportunity came. And among so many, the responsibility would be hard to fix. Of course nothing like that is likely to happen here. But there are men who'd never pass up a chance to serve their sovereign. And this particular sovereign is said to—er—remember his friends. Good night. See you to-morrow."

When Vance had gone, Becker sat for a long time in meditative silence. His mental processes were not rapid. Presently he spoke musingly, half aloud:

"It iss goot to 'bump off' der boss, ja. Better it iss yet to blow up der plant, *nicht wahr?*"

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. and Mrs. Markham Kent dined together for the first time at Mark's hunting lodge, where they were to spend their strangest of honeymoons. Barnes, a trifle flustered by the fact that he had been straitly instructed to address his master as "Mr. Eric," and nervously on his guard lest he forget, served. It was rather a silent wedding feast, though both Constance and Mark tried to make conversation. But both were still dazed by the suddenness of the serious step they had taken. Constance was palpably nervous, and her face showed pale, despite its set smile; and Mark had, as yet, been unable quite to get himself together.

The situation was certainly unique. Mark had the empty husk of his heart's desire. He was the husband, with due sanction of the law, of the woman he loved, but he knew that that woman believed herself the wife of another man, for whom her feeling was at best one of toleration. Circumstances had made

it necessary that she should marry him, but her manner indicated the hope that he would regard that marriage merely as a matter of form.

Mark was entirely willing to respect her wishes. Though united by a perfectly legal bond, they were in effect the veriest strangers. He loved her and hoped ultimately to win her, but he must needs woo her in his own person, not as his brother's understudy. He abhorred any form of deception, and he was eager to confess the impersonation; yet he realized the wisdom of the warning Eric had volunteered.

"Break the news to her gently, old man, and don't be too sudden about it," he had counseled. "Don't spring it on her too abruptly. Think how awkward it's going to be for her to learn that she's married a man she doesn't know!"

"But," Mark protested, "won't it be yet more awkward for her to learn it by chance? Oughtn't I to tell her at once? I want to play straight, you know."

"Why, I don't know. Buried alive out there in the wilds, there'll be no chance for her to get wise, so you've plenty of time to lead up to your confession artistically."

"But it doesn't seem quite fair."

Eric smiled.

"I don't think she'll have any quarrel with you on that score, Mark. Strikes me you're being pretty decent. You're saving her reputation at the sacrifice——"

Mark gulped.

"Don't call it that, Eric. It's quite the other thing. I——"

"My word, Mark!" gasped Eric. "You don't mean that—that you're interested in Miss Craig?"

"I've cared for her," Mark answered simply, "from the moment I first saw her."

Eric whistled.

"Oh, I say! That does make a difference! Why, I supposed you'd just

have the marriage quietly annulled in a few months. But if you care——"

"I care, all right. Though that probably won't excuse the deception—from her viewpoint."

"Perhaps not. I'm afraid she'll feel that the Benedick rôle was thrust upon you when I backed out, and that we thought it a case of 'any port in a storm' with her. It's rather awkward all round, but everything's sure to come right. You're a decent chap, Mark, and any woman might love you."

"Might, but probably won't," Mark said rather grimly. "It happens like that in books. In reality, she'll probably hate me for my officiousness. Really, I don't like this sailing under false colors. I feel myself a knave——"

"Nonsense! You're doing a knightly—not to say quixotic—thing. And if she's the girl I think she is, she'll appreciate your chivalry. Just stall along for a while. Don't overplay the rôle. Respect her maiden reserve and all that, you know. Then, after a bit, gradually increase the tempo, work up to a big crescendo, and then—tell her. How's that?"

"Well enough, I suppose," Mark said dubiously. "Only, you see, Eric, I happen to be human."

Eric shouted.

"Not really? I didn't know you had an emotion in your make-up, you old iceberg!"

"I say, Eric," Mark remonstrated huffily, "this may strike you as funny, but it's a pretty serious situation for me. While I hope and believe I'd marry any woman under similar circumstances, in this instance, it's the thing I most wish for. But how can I convince her of that? She'll probably feel that I cast myself into the breach, when you failed her."

"Naturally, if you put it like that. Why not say that you loved her on sight and persuaded me to let you substitute? It's all in the way you put a

thing whether it gets over or not. Give her a little time to get used to the situation—and to you. Then, unless you muff things, I'll wager it'll be all right. So long, old chap. Luck to you!"

"Eric," Constance said, when, dinner at last over, they found themselves alone, "just how soon can we consistently arrange for a divorce?"

Mark started sharply. He had not quite expected this.

"Divorce?" he echoed dazedly. "You don't mean——"

She nodded. She was quite calm now, though still a little pale.

"Yes. I've been thinking I've been very selfish and thoughtless in accepting what I'm sure your chivalry prompted. I know you don't care for me in the least—your polite pretense didn't deceive me a bit—but we've always been so fanatically proud of our untarnished name that I felt, for my family's sake, I must take advantage of your offer. I've had no time all day to think, but to-night I've been wondering if I haven't spoiled your life, if perhaps you don't care for some one else."

Mark's heart was beating tumultuously. Here was his opportunity, if he but knew how to seize it. But he found it even less easy than he had anticipated.

"I can assure you," he said simply, "that there's no one else and that, of all the women in the world, I should have chosen you. I didn't marry you from merely chivalrous motives or for any other reason than that I love you."

Constance stared at him, half amazed, half amused.

"Good work, Eric!" she applauded. "You say that almost as if you meant it. But of course I'm told you've a perfect technique."

Despite his lifelong self-repression, Markham Kent was a man of intense emotions; he loved and hated hard.

"I do mean it," he said huskily, "with all my heart. I haven't any technique, but I love you utterly. Can't you see how much I mean it, dear?"

Puzzled, she glanced up at him quickly. Her own eyes kindled ever so little at what she saw in his. His heartbeats quickened and involuntarily he moved a little toward her.

But the girl, recalling Eric's fierce kiss of the morning, shrank sharply away. Eric was rather lacking in fine discrimination. Stirred to momentary ardor by her—palpably reluctant—promise, he had kissed this innocent young girl as he might have kissed Lola. Each recurrent thought of that caress brought a painful flush to Constance's cheek. It seemed to presage ill for her hope of a platonic union, to be speedily dissolved.

"Don't, Eric!" she pleaded. "Please don't! I—— You see, Eric, in spite of your chivalry, which I so much appreciate, I don't love you. I—— There's some one else."

Mark's face whitened; his jaw set tensely.

"He—this other man—cares for you, of course," he said quietly. "Very well. I won't stand in the way. I—I'm sorry I thrust myself upon you. You shall have your freedom as soon as it can be arranged."

She had risen and stood looking up at him piteously, her eyes dark with pain.

"He—does care," she whispered, "but—you see, he's—married already. He didn't mean to let me know he cared. He tried—so hard!—not to speak. But one night—he lost his head—and told me—he loved me. After that, there was nothing for us but separation. That's why I came here. And now I'm afraid I've spoiled your life as well as my own. Forgive me if you can, Eric, and please, please, take your freedom!"

"But I don't want to be free," Mark

protested. "I'd rather have you, even without love, than any other woman in the world."

She smiled a trifle wanly.

"I'm afraid you're only trying to save my pride," she appreciated. "It's kind of you, but I see now that I shouldn't have accepted the sacrifice, Eric. I knew you didn't love me, and I knew I didn't and couldn't love you—ever. Forgive my saying this—I must seem an awful ingrate—but you're not at all the sort of man I've dreamed of loving. I couldn't care for a man who wasn't strong and earnest and purposeful. And you freely confess you're a drifter, a spendthrift, and—a bit of a Lovelace."

Again opportunity beckoned to Mark, but he couldn't quite see himself announcing:

"I'm not the wastrel Eric, but the model Mark, sober, industrious, highly moral, and all the other things you've mentioned. I think I can qualify."

Instead, he said: "I'm sincere in saying that I love you with my whole heart, Constance. But since you don't love me, I shan't annoy you with protestations or—er—demonstrations of affection. I understand perfectly why you married me. For the same reason, I think you must continue to accept my protection, for a while at least. Then, later, a divorce can be arranged. Meantime, consider yourself my guest. I shan't ask anything of you except your friendship. There's no reason why we shouldn't be comrades, is there?"

Constance stood staring at him in sheer surprise. This from Eric Kent, Lovelace, Sybarite, reputed *roué*. Could it be possible that the agony of apprehension that impassioned kiss had engendered was groundless? Could she trust him?

He met her gaze steadily. For the first time, she saw in Eric's handsome face, which she had always thought a

trifle weak, strength and a reassuring sincerity.

"Thank you," she said simply.

She held out her hand, and he took it in his. To her own surprise, she found the contact not distasteful; the slight sense of repulsion the occurrence of the morning had inspired seemed to have vanished. It struck her suddenly that he had not, since, in any way encroached; he had scarcely touched her since that morning, when he had asked her to become his wife. The quality of that one caress made his later manner the more surprising. According to popular repute, Eric was not given to restraint as regarded the emotions, and she marveled, even while she felicitated herself upon his repression.

"Then that's all right," she heard him say gently. "I want you to feel entirely at home and at ease with me, Constance. All that I have and am is at your disposal, but I'll try not to presume. Good night, dear."

He held open the door of her room—a man's room hastily feminized by a few intelligent touches.

"I hope you'll be comfortable. The lodge is pretty primitive, you know."

As he spoke, he took the key from the lock and laid it, casually, in her hand.

Constance had never quite liked Eric Kent. The gossip she had heard as to his mode of life had given her a feeling of distaste which she had never been able to overcome. But to-night he had shown himself so generous, so thoughtful, that her prejudice vanished, leaving in its stead a warm sense of gratitude and liking. If Eric were only different, more like the elder brother of whose virtues she had heard so much— Even as matters stood, he had proved himself a decent sort and lifted a weight off her mind. Impulsively she again held out her hand.

"I'm grateful for—everything," she whispered. "Good night and happy

dreams." She stepped inside her room and closed the door.

Mark, standing as she had left him, noted that she did not turn the key in the lock. It was her tribute.

CHAPTER X.

"I've rather a nice front lawn and a wonderful landscape gardener," boasted Mark as they stood, next morning, on the piazza. Below and about them lay the forest primeval, engirdling the small clearing wherein stood the lodge, servants' shack, and garage. "Want to look it over?"

Constance answered his smile.

"I was hoping you'd ask me," she said. "I'll be ready before you finish that cigar."

True to her word, she emerged in an incredibly short time clad in short tweed skirt, flannel waist, sport hat, and stout, high walking boots.

"Do I look the part?" she asked.

Mark's eyes dwelt rapidly upon her.

"Perfectly. I was afraid you'd appear in white muslin and French heels."

"I've roughed it before, and I like it—for a while. That's the primeval savage in me. Then civilization calls, and I answer with alacrity. This is less primitive than most shooting boxes. It's palatial compared with Stan's. Once we—Stan and I—tentted for a week."

"Like it?" he queried, loving the sound of her voice.

"Not particularly. There were spiders and ants and things. The primitive soon palls on me."

"Lonesome Lodge is near enough to civilization to make it a combination affair. I had that in mind when I built the shack. When I'm here, I can easily motor over to see how things are going at the plant."

She glanced at him quickly.

"I didn't know you were particularly interested in the plant. Didn't you tell me you left it largely to your brother?"

Mark flushed and bit his lip.

"Oh, he takes care of the details," he said as casually as he could, "but I like to look in now and again. You won't mind if I run over once in a way, will you?"

"Every day if you like," she said cordially. "You mustn't let me be a nuisance, Eric. Please treat me just as you'd treat another man you'd asked here for the shooting. Don't feel that you must 'entertain' me. I'm sufficiently obligated already."

"Don't say that!" he begged. "Can't you see that I——" He broke off. "I beg your pardon. There's rather a pretty little toy waterfall about half a mile from this. Would you care to see it?"

She nodded.

"Anything, anywhere. It's a joy just to breathe this spicy September air. I only wish the trees had on their war paint—though this is wonderful enough."

They walked on, now chatting casually, now in friendly silence, a communion without words. Constance was conscious of a heady sense of happiness, a feeling of relief and reassurance. She had regarded her marriage to Eric Kent as an unpleasant alternative to gossip and scandal; she had found it—and him—so different from what she had prefigured that, in the reaction from apprehension, she was almost *exaltée*. She had feared to meet in Eric a masterful wooer, deaf to protest and blind to distaste; she had found, instead, a friend and a comrade, considerate of her comfort and thoughtful of her lightest wish.

"I fancy," she was thinking as she walked beside him through the wood, "he feels as I do about the matter. I don't doubt it's a deadly bore to him, and he's relieved to find I don't expect him to pretend."

However that may have been, the *soi-disant* Eric gave no evidence of

boredom. At moments, when her eyes met his, she could almost have believed, had she not known to the contrary, that she read in their depths a something that, even in its negation, thrilled her a little. Eric was really handsomer, even, than she had thought. She liked him in his tweeds and walking boots. She liked his slow, grave smile, and his eyes—he certainly had nice eyes—— She pulled herself up with a gasp of surprise. She, who had believed her heart irrevocably given to one man, was actually taking stock of the good points of another. That that other chanced to be her husband made no difference in her feminine philosophy.

The waterfall proved scarce a dangerous rival of Niagara. It fell like a slender silver veil down the face of a cliff into a pool, from which flowed a little brook that chuckled impishly as it ran, winding willfully hither and yon, like the straying feet of a child.

"Jolly little stream, isn't it?" approved Mark, as they sat down on a rocky ledge above it.

For an hour or more, they lingered there, in an atmosphere concentrated and intimate, Mark unconsciously revealing, by an occasional random word or phrase, a soul side that was not for the general world. More than once Constance glanced at him in surprise. This was not the Eric Kent she knew—and didn't love.

"I don't know how to explain it, Eric," she said reflectively at length, "and I can't say why or how, but somehow you seem—different."

"Thanks," he laughed. "I'm construing that as a compliment, you see."

"You may," she answered gravely. "I begin to believe I've been unfair in my estimate of you."

"Impossible," he said half lightly, yet with an undertone of earnestness. "You couldn't think worse of me than I deserve." He honestly meant it. The

deception he had practiced upon her weighed upon his mind.

"I don't think anything that isn't flattering," she assured him, smiling. "You've been so kind."

"I wish I deserved that," he said humbly, "but I don't. You persist in making me out a martyr, when, if you only knew— But I promised. I'll try to remember."

Feminine nature is proverbially inconsequent and inconsistent. Having pledged her husband to platonic, Constance subconsciously resented his complaisance and almost wished she hadn't. She liked Eric so much better than she had imagined possible. And physically— Of course she didn't want him to presume—but he needn't have been *quite*— She checked the thought in amazement and dismay.

"I think we must be going," she reminded, scrambling down from her perch before he could assist her. "I know I ought to say something about the beauty of all this, but all I can think of is that I'm most unromantically hungry. Don't you suppose it's nearly luncheon time?"

Mark laughed. He, too, was conscious of a singular lightness of heart. He had put business cares aside and was living each moment with the whole-hearted zest of a boy.

"I hope so. This air gives one an appetite, doesn't it? Let's go."

They set gayly off down the hillside. Already the golden glow of early autumn was beginning to pervade the forest. It seemed to shimmer in the atmosphere, gilding the leaves, which had but just begun to turn, and tinging the clouds that floated above the wind in the still blue sky. Pungent odors of flower and herb spiced the wine of the air; sunbeams, filtering through the boughs, flecked the forest's russet floor; birds called overhead, and shy wood creatures scurried into the underbrush at their approach.

Once Constance, stumbling over the root of a tree, swayed forward and would have fallen but that Mark caught her in his arms. For the merest fraction of an instant, she lay with her cheek pressed hard against the rough tweed of his Norfolk as he held her. Then, with an effect of haste, he released her. He was living strictly up to the letter of his bond, but for some occult reason, Constance was less enthusiastically pleased than she should have been.

That night they sat long and late on the piazza, soft semidarkness about them, white stars overhead, and velvet silence everywhere. Shadowy trees and silent hills rising against the night sky seemed to shut them in together. Somewhere out beyond rose and fell the throbbing, pulsing tide of human life, but, isolate in their forest fastness, they did not hear its beat.

Next day they took a yet longer tramp, lunching, picnic fashion, in the wood. It was not until she was dressing for the evening that it suddenly occurred to Constance that she had scarcely thought of Sears since her hasty marriage. With a swift revulsion of feeling, she found her lashes wet.

But she was smiling when, twenty minutes later, she joined Mark, and she was very gay during dinner, though his keen eye detected faint traces of tears. They were lingering over their coffee when the telephone rang. Barnes disappeared, returning after a moment to announce unguardedly:

"You're wanted at the telephone, Mr. Mark, sir—er—Mr. Eric, I should say."

Constance noted Mark's confusion and the swift glance he cast at her, as, with a murmured word of excuse, he left the room. Barnes, visibly disconcerted, removed the cups.

"Is Mr. Eric so like his brother that you find it difficult to distinguish them, Barnes?" The question asked itself.

Barnes almost dropped his tray.

"Oh, yes, madam. Quite so, madam. Indeed, many people are unable to tell them apart."

"Odd," she mused aloud, "that I never chanced to meet this brother!"

Barnes started.

"Yes, madam," he ventured, "very odd indeed. But you see, madam, Mr. Mark is very busy and by way of being a bit of a recluse."

"I see," she smiled. But her brows drew together in a little perplexed frown.

CHAPTER XL

Lola Brett tore open the letter her maid handed her and read it hastily:

Everything set for to-morrow night, old girl. German fathead turns the trick. With any sort of luck, there'll be a change of owners before midnight. Then it's up to you.

I'd like to get out of town before the thing breaks, but I've got to stick around to see that the bonthead doesn't bungle it. Hope to make the Limited to-morrow midnight.

C.

Lola dropped the letter with a frightened little shiver. Like the majority of her ilk, she was greedy, a grafter, and unhampered by any particular inhibitions, but she lacked the criminal instinct. Blackmail and graft were, in her philosophy, entirely legitimate, but she shuddered at the thing that her lover so lightly planned. As yet cowardice had confined him to petty thefts, but now, with Becker as his tool, he was adventuring upon a larger criminal career.

The girl was genuinely scared. Like all femininity, she had a wholesome fear of the law. Aside from this, she was, at heart, not wholly a bad sort.



But what should she, what could she do? How could she warn Eric without betraying Vance and incriminating herself?

All day the better and baser instincts warred within her. The line of least resistance tempted. She realized that, with Eric sole heir to the vast Kent estate, her future would be assured. She was confident of her power. There was practically no limit to the possi-



Sears was startled, but he was no physical coward. He faced Mark truculently.

bilities open to her. She might even succeed in inducing Eric to make her his wife. But—again a shudder shook her—could any end justify the means Vance proposed to employ?

She loved Clyde Vance with all the intensity of which she was capable. She knew him for a cad, a coward, a despicable parasite, without honor, pride, or gratitude. And yet, with the fatuity of her type, she worshiped him.

He neglected and abused her; he treated her with thinly veiled contempt and paraded his other amours before her; yet, strangely, she clung to him.

She was torn between conscience and avarice, between affection for her lover and horror of his projected crime. The clock ticked off the minutes remorselessly. She watched it as if fascinated. In a few hours, such a very few, a life would perhaps be sacrificed to Vance's

criminal greed. A wild thought of telephoning him to beg him to reconsider flashed upon her, but she realized just what her entreaty would amount to. She was sure that no plea of hers would turn him from his purpose. She had known, in a general way, that Vance's stay in Kentland boded ill for Markham Kent. But she had not allowed herself to dwell upon what she knew he had in mind. Now she was brought abruptly face to face with the stark, staring horror of it, and she shrank and cowered before it.

And so she sat through the hours, a prey to fears that almost drove her mad. At length, unable longer to bear the strain in solitude, she dressed and went to a garish near-by hostelry where many of her kind forgathered at the tea hour. She had hoped that the life and movement and inconsequent chatter about her would take her mind off its gloomy burden of fear and foreboding, but terror haunted her even here. She started and almost shrieked when Lila La Rue, of the Garden, laid a hand on her shoulder in passing. Young Halsted, a callow would-be devotee, smiled eagerly at her across the room; but the blank, unseeing stare with which she met it froze the smile on his lips, and he dropped back into the chair from which he had half risen to join her.

Presently she found herself back in her apartment, pacing restlessly to and fro, unable to control her nervousness, which mounted with every moment. Outside in the streets, the lights were beginning to blossom like golden flowers; the city was waking to its feverish false dawn. Soon she must leave for the Garden. And while she danced, a grim tragedy, of which she was indirectly the inspiration, might be enacting.

She turned to the telephone and called Eric Kent on the long-distance wire.

She tried to determine, as she waited, precisely what she must say and leave unsaid; how guardedly convey a warning, without being specific or incriminating. But when—æons later, it seemed to her impatience—she heard the operator's laconic "Here's your party, please," and Eric's voice came to her through space, she went to pieces.

What cryptic incoherencies she babbled she never knew. And Eric, listening perplexedly, had scarcely gathered, when she rang off, against what form of danger she strove to warn him and whether it threatened Mark or the plant. He tried to reach her for fuller details, but she refused to answer. In fact she was already on her way to the theater.

One thing only was clear to Eric's mind—whatever peril impended was real and imminent; Lola's frantic petition for haste told him that. He called the plant—only to learn that Mark had left the office. Then he succeeded in reaching the chief of the local force.

"Eric Kent speaking, Vickers," he said briefly. "Meet me at the manager's office at the plant in—say eight minutes, will you? Urgent. Good-by."

CHAPTER XII.

A week, brief though it be in point of fact, may compass a wide range of emotional experience. If, as the poet counsels, we should "count time by heart throbs," Mark and Constance Kent had, in the short space since their hasty marriage, lived a lifetime.

Although he had not yet found courage to reveal his identity to Constance, it pleased Mark to fancy that the constraint and faint repulsion his quickened perceptions had sensed in her manner at first had almost wholly vanished.

The event proved them rather unusually congenial. They read, tramped, and motored, had long, intimate talks

and fell into yet more intimate silences on the piazza, or, if the night were chill, beside the snapping logs on the wide stone hearth within. Mark was a recluse by nature. Hitherto he had lived in the "solitude of the sufficient self," and he had half feared "the imperfection of union." But Constance never jarred upon him; she was exquisitely *simpatica* and subtly and satisfyingly responsive.

The situation was a delicate and difficult one, complicated by the misinterpretation of each of the attitude of the other. There were moments when both were conscious of an electric quality in the atmosphere. Mark felt sure that she must sense the keen thrill her lightest touch occasioned him; and of late he had begun to fancy that she herself was not wholly unmoved by these casual contacts. But some subtle inhibition forbade him to put his fate rashly to the touch.

He loved the girl with all the strength of the strong man who has habitually held his emotions in leash. He feared momentarily lest a rising tide of feeling should sweep him off his feet, and he held himself with a rigor that but dammed the flood which must ultimately burst its bounds. Markham Kent had the instincts of a gentleman and he struggled hard to live up to his code. But it was not always easy.

Constance, possessed of the seven—or seventy—tiny devils of feminine coquetry, and perhaps inspired by a feeling she refused to recognize, made things hard for him. The situation was at once so piquant and so perilous as to intrigue her immensely; she was constantly tempted to put her power to the touch. There is a wanton strain latent in even the best of women, and Constance, at moments, seemed instinct with the subtle and sublimated essence of the *diablerie* of all the Liliths and Delilahs and Circes who have wrought havoc with the hearts and lives of men.

She knew that she played with fire, yet she could not resist the impulse. At moments she saw, or fancied she saw, in her husband's eyes something that at once flattered and frightened her; for, however rigidly he might guard speech and action, he could not entirely control his expression.

Constance was what some one has termed "incurably feminine," and it was an inexplicably feminine and inconsistent impulse that impelled her, one autumn night of wind and rain when they had lingered late before the blazing logs on the hearth of the living room, to say:

"Do you know, Eric, you haven't—kissed me—since the morning of our wedding day?"

Mark started and paled, but managed to say quite steadily:

"Wasn't it 'so nominated in the bond?'"

"Of course. And you've lived up to the letter of it with unflattering strictness. You might have pretended, for my vanity's sake, that you couldn't resist——"

The expression on Mark's face frightened her. He took a swift step toward her. Instinctively she recoiled a trifle, shaken by a sudden tremor that was not wholly fear. Her heart beating tumultuously, her cheeks aflame, she stood waiting, expectant of a wild embrace, a kiss as fiercely impassioned as that which he had crushed upon her unwilling lips the morning he had asked her to marry him. And in that instant, she repented heartily of her rashness; she sickened with shame for the cheapness and crudity of the coquetry. Eric would probably—and not without warrant—presume upon it, and she would have only herself to blame. She could scarcely resent what she had deliberately invited.

So, tremulously, fearfully, she stood and waited. What would it mean to her, to him—this first kiss? He was

very close to her now; his breath stirred her hair, as he bent his tall head toward her. Then—she heard him laugh lightly. "A sin of omission"—she sensed the quality of his smile—"I'm delighted to repair. Aw'fly good of you to let me."

His lips just brushed her cheek, casually, inconsequently, almost perfunctorily, she felt. Then, with a pleasant "Good night, my dear Constance," he opened her door and held it for her to enter.

"Good night."

She managed a smile and a casual air until the door was closed upon her. But her cheeks were flaming and her eyes were bright with tears of shame and anger. She felt snubbed, humiliated, definitely put in her place. And, being a reasonable being, she was able, despite the sting of it, to recognize the justice of Eric's attitude. She herself had made the terms of their compact, and she herself had invited its breach.

"Precisely what I deserved," she appreciated. "I don't know what possessed me. I deliberately tempted him to violate our agreement, and he was right to rebuke me. It was unpardonable, in the circumstances—cheap, common, vulgar, worthy of a barmaid! Knowing he doesn't love me, knowing he married me as a duty, I must needs cheapen myself by offering a kiss he didn't want! He didn't care for the symbol without the substance, and he's too fine to pretend— Oh, I could die of shame!"

The tears she wept that night were not from Eugene Sears.

It might have comforted her a little could Constance have seen Mark's face as the door closed upon her. His smile faded, his jaw set tense and hard, his hands clenched, and his breath came swiftly. His brows were contracted, as if he were in pain, and his lips were a little pale.

"God," he whispered. "I love her—how I love her! And I've got to hold on to myself! I mustn't fall down when she tests me out."

CHAPTER XIII.

Eric Kent burst breathlessly into his brother's office. Mark's secretary, at his request, was awaiting him.

"Do you suppose Mark's had time to reach home yet, Hervey?" Eric demanded, throwing off his coat and cap.

"Hardly, I should say, sir. He left less than twenty minutes ago. Is there something urgent, sir?"

Eric nodded.

"Something so damned urgent that I hardly know what to do first. I've information that there's mischief afoot, some plot affecting Mark and the plant. It's to be pulled off to-night. I don't know who's at the bottom of it, but we've got to get busy. Have Herrick take my racer and try to overtake Mark. Tell him to speed her up for all she's worth."

Which last injunction Herrick obeyed so literally that the flying car left the road at a sharp curve, shot over an embankment, and turned turtle, fortunately flinging its driver clear of the wreck, but leaving him lying stunned and still beside the way.

Meantime, Eric got Hoyt, the plant's foreman, on the wire and instructed him to report immediately at the office. Then he called the Lodge. Constance herself answered.

"Has Mark—er—Eric reached home yet?" he asked.

"Not yet," came the reply, "but I expect him shortly. Is there any message?"

"No—er—yes," hesitated Eric, not wishing to alarm her. "Have him call his brother at the plant, please, as soon as he gets in."

Hoyt and Vickers arrived simultaneously. Eric briefly sketched the situa-

tion, telling them what he knew, which was very little indeed.

"I think maybe I can add something to that, Mr. Kent," the chief said thoughtfully. "I didn't lay much stress on the matter at the time, but, taken in connection with what you've heard, it looks as if there might be something in it. A dago, the wife of one of your workmen, came to me this morning with a wild-eyed tale of something she'd overheard last night at a neighbor's. The Hollenbachs—that was the neighbor's name—speak very little English, and what the wop overheard didn't mean anything to them. Their lodger, a munitions worker named Becker—"

"Becker?" the foreman broke in excitedly. "I know the man, Vickers. He's a malcontent, always stirring up strife among the other workmen. I ought to have fired him long ago. He's the sort that starts strikes and makes trouble."

Vickers nodded.

"That's Becker. He seems to be running true to form. I couldn't make much out of what the wop tried to tell me—it was mostly gibberish and gestures—but I gathered that Becker and a chap he called Maxon were cooking up something. As near as I could make out, it was something about Mr. Mark. The dago seemed to think they meant murder. As I said, I didn't attach much importance to it, but just the same, I've had both men shadowed all day. This Maxon's a suspicious sort—been hanging around here for a week or so, maybe longer—and I think he'll bear watching on general principles."

Eric rose.

"There's certainly something stirring," he said with conviction. "We'd best get busy. My idea is to let 'em go their limit and catch 'em red-handed."

"Right-o," agreed the genial chief. "We'll get 'em with the goods."

A man's figure showed itself, dimly outlined in the semidarkness, against the night sky, at the top of the high wall surrounding the Kentland Munitions Factory. For a moment it poised rather awkwardly there; then it dropped heavily to a pile of timber, fortuitously placed within. Evidently the intruder knew his ground, for he had chosen the most secluded section of the inclosure and selected a spot where his fall would be broken.

Silently he crouched, apparently listening for the footstep of the night watchman. Then slowly, cautiously, he began to move forward, always keeping in shadow, dodging from one sheltering niche or wall to another, working always toward the plant's main building. No light showed in the great, massed structure, except where a yellow ray streamed out from the manager's office. The crouching figure lifted its head to glance at this, then moved on more swiftly.

Straight toward its objective it crept, pausing cautiously now and again to listen. The footstep of the night watchman approached, came perilously near, then retreated. Then the silent figure moved confidently forward. Before a certain basement window, it paused, crouching beside it for a long time. A cautious hand tried the window. The iron bars that guarded it gave at the touch; the window swung inward, evidently having been unfastened from within. Again a brief interval of watchful waiting; then a man's figure lowered itself into the opening and pulled the window shut behind him.

The man drew a long breath and stood erect. The room in which he found himself was a vast concrete basement, stored with high explosives. His face was in shadow, but his burly figure stood out against the darkness as he darted the gleam of his flash light hither and yon. No sound broke the

stillness except his own heavy breathing.

He busied himself with unwrapping the small parcel he had carried. He was working slowly, deliberately, without fear of interruption when, out of the blackness surrounding him, a voice spoke curtly:

"Hands up, you!"

Two men, behind leveled revolvers, stepped into view. Becker's hands shot into the air, dropping the time fuse they held. His fat, florid face turned a ghastly yellow under the rays of Vicker's powerful electric torch. Then a voice the Teuton recognized as that of the plant's foreman said distinctly:

"Yes, it's Becker, chief."

Vickers moved nearer, keeping his prisoner covered.

"Put out your dukes, Dutch," he said pleasantly. "I've a pair of bracelets for you."

Becker had stood petrified, his slow wits refusing their office. But as he heard the click of the handcuffs Vickers snapped on his wrists, his choler rose in a scarlet surge of fury that made his stolid face demoniac.

"It iss Maxon!" he choked. "He hass tricked me, *ja!* He vas *ein* stool pigeon, *ein* spy!"

None too gently, they hustled him up the stair and into the office where Eric and Hervey sat waiting. And while Becker, apoplectic with baffled fury, sputtered his confession, Hoyt instructed over the wire two plain-clothes men, who had kept Vance in sight since morning.

Vance, with a view to establishing his alibi in case of question, was lounging in the lobby of the Kentland House. He had paid his bill and packed his grip and hoped fervently to get away on the midnight special. He was in a state of the utmost nervous tension, starting at every sound. In order to keep himself clear of the crime, he had perforce left everything to Becker, who

had stubbornly declined to discuss his plan, further than to opine that "t'ings would happen." Vance dared not press him too closely; dared not follow him or even keep watch from afar, lest somehow he should be connected with the tragedy he believed impending.

Becker had kept his own counsel. Stupid and stolid as he seemed, he possessed a certain craft which enabled him to play Maxon's game convincingly. But what he was-pleased to consider his patriotism, combined with the hope of substantial reward from his country's agents, had impelled him to improve upon Maxon's suggestion. He hoped to "get" Mark. But that was a side issue, not his main objective. To him, Mark Kent personally meant nothing, but as manager of the Kentland plant, inimical in its workings to Becker's country, he stood for something hostile and therefore to be disposed of. Becker was not the sort to stick at a bagatelle like murder; it was merely, in his mind, a question of expediency. With the plant in ruins, Mark's power would be nullified. The plant was his real objective; its doom was already sealed in Becker's brain. If Mark perished with it, so much the better. But he was shrewd enough to realize that Maxon's was a personal score, and he allowed him to believe that the night's work would definitely settle it, without trace or clew.

According to instructions, one of Vicker's men entered the lobby, slouched over alongside Vance, who sat pretending to read an evening paper, and muttered under his breath:

"Becker wants to see you outside. Says it's important. Big news."

Vance trembled. He was anxious to avoid any appearance of collusion with Becker, whose Teutonic stupidity, he feared, might bungle. But the messenger stood waiting and, seeing no avenue of escape, Vance rose, as casually as

he might, and strolled out of the side door. A man stood in the shadows awaiting him.

"All right, Becker," Vance got out through chattering teeth. "What luck?"

But the man who stepped close to him was not Becker. A strong hand shot out, catching both of Vance's in a grip of steel. The messenger who had summoned him appeared mysteriously on his other hand. Vance struggled, but to no purpose.

"Damn you!" he whined. "What d' you mean by this?"

"Shut up!" rasped his captor. "Keep quiet and we won't put on the cuffs. Hike!"

Dazed and stunned, frightened to the depths of his rabbit soul, Vance let them lead him unresistingly away.

"What—where are you taking me?" he faltered, trying to bluster. "You've nothing on me. I can prove——"

"Don't talk," advised one of the plain-clothes men. "You'll get the chance later on."

As they walked, Vance busied himself trying to frame a denial or defense, but when, in Mark Kent's office, he was confronted with the spectacle of his accomplice, handcuffed and helpless, he collapsed. Becker had blundered and betrayed him! Visions of the electric chair drifted before his eyes; his knees shook under him; he would have fallen but that the officers who held him dragged him upright.

As they entered, Becker burst into a torrent of German-English invective directed at the newcomer.

"It vas you, you *teufel*, you *verdammte teufel*!" he shrieked, "you who didt persuade me——"

"Shut up, you fool!" snarled Vance, frantic with fear. "What are you trying to do? He's crazy, gentlemen. I never saw him before."

"Stow that!" advised the chief. "Your side kick's squealed, Maxon, and you might as well come across. You

won't gain anything by bluffing. We've got your number, all right."

"I tell you," Vance protested desperately, sobbingly, "I don't know him! He's trying to double cross me—I don't know why."

Eric Kent was staring, with a puzzled frown, at the ferret face upon which the light fell ruthlessly. That he had seen this man somewhere before he was positive, but the circumstances eluded him. Then his eyes met those of the prisoner—in which he saw an appeal and a threat. A sudden idea had suggested itself to Vance's desperation. He would try it as a last resort.

"I think Mr. Kent can vouch for me," he said as steadily as he could. "He knows me. We've mutual friends in New York. I'm sure he'll speak a word for me. It'll be to his interest."

In a flash it came to Eric where he had seen this creature, and the veiled threat in his words was not lost upon him. But he gave no sign.

"That won't get you anything, Maxon," he said sternly, "not a thing in the world. I don't know you, and there's nothing you can spill that will be news in this man's town. You're going to get yours, if you ask me, and here's hoping you get it good and plenty! That's all, Vickers. I think you may remove your menagerie."

When they had gone, Eric sat down and thought hard. His mental processes were not slow, and it required no great perspicacity to piece the facts together. He had few illusions, and Lola's fidelity was not one of them. By a simple process of illation, the case was quite clear.

"And for two years," was his ultimate deduction, "I've been meal ticket for that!"

He called Lola on long distance.

"You'll regret to hear," he said suavely, "that your friend is—er—temporarily detained here. You needn't expect him for—say a term of years."

Lola's frightened gasp was audible over the wire.

"I don't get you," she protested breathlessly. "I—"

"I think you do, Lola. If you don't, you will. I want to add that I appreciate your warning, and I'll see that you get your reward to-morrow—*by mail*. Incidentally, I'm through."

Over her frenzied protest, he hung up.

And there ended for Eric Kent the trail where the white lights beat. Within a week, he was in Canada and had volunteered for service overseas.

CHAPTER XIV.

There is nothing in the whole scheme of things triter—or truer—than the ancient aphorism as to the blindness of a certain emotion. The lover lacks perspective; his vision is hopelessly distorted; his sense of values ceases to exist. Perversely, hopelessly, willfully blind, he gropes in mental dusks peopled with shapes of fear that mock and haunt him. He becomes a species of human sensitive plant, quivering alive to chance contacts, stirred by every passing breath, chilled by any casual wind. A smile lifts him to heights supernal; a glance hurls him to abysmal depths.

Constance Kent, against the evidence of her senses, persisted in imagining that only a strict construction of *noblesse oblige* had impelled her husband to marry her; and Mark as persistently believed that she regarded that marriage as an unfortunate alternative to unpleasant comment, a lesser evil to be remedied as soon as was consistent with a due regard for the conventions.

He had felt it his duty, before he had married Constance, to explain the situation to Mrs. Trask and to ask her counsel. Fortunately Elinor Trask, despite her veneer of worldliness, was a sane, sensible woman, with a saving

sense of humor. The novelty of the affair appealed to her; its romance intrigued her interest; she genuinely liked Mark Kent, and she saw safe haven for her niece in his care. Her sister had rather more than hinted at the unfortunate heart affair that had sent Constance to her aunt, and that lady was glad of anything that might serve to relegate the incident to the background. It is possible, also, that she was not unmindful of Mark's eligibility, from every standpoint, as a *parti*. So she gave both consent and counsel, though her own fine sense of *noblesse oblige* had impelled her to protest:

"Do you think it amounts to quite that, Mark? Of course Constance will be the subject of some unpleasant comment, but I can take her away and it will soon be forgotten."

"I don't care to have Miss Craig subjected to unpleasant comment on Eric's account," Mark stated with decision. Then, with the alluring smile so like his brother's: "You see, I'm not wholly disinterested, Mrs. Trask. I'm selfish enough to be glad of this opportunity."

"Do you really mean that, Mark, or are you merely being polite?"

"If I could only make you realize how much I mean it!"

"It's very fine and chivalrous of you to sacrifice your freedom for a girl whom you don't know, but, while Constance would appreciate that, she's too spirited to relish being taken on sufferance."

"Please don't put it like that!" he begged. "I'm the luckiest man alive. You see, I've never gone in for—er—girls, but I've cherished ideals always, and Miss Craig fulfills the best of them."

"In the matter of personal appearance, perhaps, but how can you know that she's otherwise all you fancy her? You've met her only once. You don't know her really, and she might prove

the direct antithesis of your ideal woman."

"I'll take a chance," Mark said eagerly. "If you think I may?"

"I do think so," Mrs. Trask said decidedly. "You're a fine fellow, Mark, and I've no fear of trusting my niece to your care. She can't help growing fond of you."

"You really believe I can ultimately win her?"

Mrs. Trask nodded.

"If I didn't feel confident of it, I shouldn't consent. The situation is most unusual, you realize, and I wouldn't shock her by telling her at once. Give her time to adjust herself. Don't hurry the tempo, but—make love to her every minute!"

Mark flushed.

"I'm afraid I don't know how. I'm sure I shall prove a poor sort of Romeo."

Mrs. Trask smiled.

"That sort of thing is usually instinctive. Perhaps Eric could coach you in the rôle."

"If sincerity counts——"

"It does, dear boy. Women have a sort of sixth sense that—unless vanity blinds them—enable them to gauge the genuineness of a man's professions. If you really care, Constance will be quick to sense the fact."

"But won't she think me presumptuous in daring to—to carry her off like this?"

Again Mrs. Trask smiled.

"No woman is every really offended by a man's inability to resist her, Mark. Like Juliet's romance, this is 'rash' and 'sudden,' but I don't consider it 'ill-advised.' Indeed, I've every confidence in the outcome. Just be patient and tactful and"—she glanced up at him with a gleam of something like maternal tenderness in her gaze—"your own charming self, Mark, and she'll inevitably drift from liking into love.

Don't be too precipitate; don't force the note; just let the truth gradually filter in upon her consciousness, and I'll guarantee everything will be well."

"Precisely what Eric advised."

"I should say," Mrs. Trask conceded, with an amused smile in her fine eyes, "that Eric was an authority."

So Mark did his blind best, though conscious that his technique suffered in contrast with Eric's. But always, at the back of his brain, was the preconceived idea that Constance regarded her marriage as a species of bondage from which she was eager to be free.

Constance, since the night of her rejected overture—the bare remembrance of which crimsoned her cheek with shame—had rather withdrawn into herself. Her hurt pride turned her heart toward Sears, of whom she had scarcely thought since her marriage. When she was alone, while Mark was at the plant—he drove over almost daily—she was able to work up quite a creditable degree of yearning and regret and to dignify the episode in which Sears had figured beyond its proper proportions.

But propinquity is more potent than poets and novelists like to admit. Mark was so big and good looking and withal so gentle and kindly, so thoughtful and considerate of her comfort and pleasure, that she melted a little toward him, in spite of herself. But his aloofness piqued her. He never voluntarily touched her; in fact, he seemed to avoid casual contacts until she sometimes wondered if his feeling for her amounted to actual distaste.

She could not know how desperately poor Mark held to the letter of his bond. He dared not loose his rigid hold upon himself lest control slip its leash. He did not wish to obtrude his love upon her until he perceived some evidence that it would not prove utterly distasteful to her. And so they played at cross-purposes.

CHAPTER XV.

"Just starting, Constance," Mark telephoned from his office. "Sorry to be late, but I've been unavoidably detained. Hope you won't be frightened or lonely——"

"Not frightened," Constance spoke on impulse, "but—lonely."

Mark caught the wistful note in her voice; somehow it thrilled him to sudden wild hope.

"All right," he said. "I'll shatter the speed laws. Be with you soon."

All day, a spirit of utter restlessness had possessed Constance. Mark had driven over to the plant early that morning, and she had been quite alone, except for Barnes, who was about as obtrusive as a shadow. She tried to read, but her thoughts strayed from the printed page; she sewed a little sketchily, but threw down her work in disgust; she talked at length on the telephone with Mrs. Trask, who, being an expert diagnostician along certain lines, made an amused summary of the symptoms the girl unconsciously betrayed; she wandered about the shack like a restless spirit, until she felt that she could endure inaction no longer.

Then she invaded Barnes' domain.

"I'm going to meet Mr. Kent, Barnes," she announced. "He left the office some time ago and should be nearly here."

"Very good, madam."

Swiftly she changed her shoes, flung on a sweater and cap, caught up her gloves, and swung off down the winding trail that led to civilization. The sun was just setting in a fanfare of sonant color that filtered through the low-lying purple haze veiling the hills; lances of golden light pierced the leaves; palpitant amber pulsed in the atmosphere. Before her and about her, in incomparable quiet, the forest stretched. The warm, still air was unstirred by any breeze. The silence was primeval.

Constance stood quite motionless. The gorgeous pageant of the sky passed before her eyes; cobalt shadows deepened into purple; furtive twilight began to steal among the trees. She woke as from a trance; something stirred within her; an odd, breathless sense of expectancy came upon her; the flutter of the wings of her spirit was almost audible. From far below the faint, unethereal shriek of a motor's siren drifted up to her. She caught her breath quickly; a sudden exquisite tremor shook her; all at once, *she knew*. In that moment she definitely ceased to deny or equivocate; subtle half tones of feeling were succeeded by an emotion so primitive that it frightened her. She was no longer skeptical of the miracle her soul's eyes had witnessed—that exquisite, world-old miracle which transmutes the water of everyday existence into wine.

A loudly protesting motor was climbing toward her along the winding trail that led upward from the valley. Hesitant, awed, a little tremulous, she moved forward to meet it. It came noisily nearer, nearer still. Constance paused to still the wild beating of her heart.

The car came in sight, plunged out of vision behind the trees, and again emerged into view. A man's figure was at the wheel. It was, of course, her husband. She thrilled at the word. Stumbling a little, breathless, eager, she again ran forward. The car stopped on the level with a groaning grind of its brake. Its pilot sprang from under the wheel, doffed his cap, and stared at her, blinking a little as if he were facing the sun.

"Constance!" he stammered. "Constance!" He seemed incapable of further speech.

The vivid color had drained out of the girl's face. She recoiled a little; in effect, she seemed to shrink from him. Sears saw and winced.

"Constance," he cried, "haven't you

any welcome for me? I came as soon as your letter reached me. I've been away."

"I had forgotten," Constance said coldly. Her expression staggered him. "Pray don't attach any significance to the fact that I sent you a line to tell you I was marrying Eric Kent. I meant to write a definite 'Finis' to that chapter of my life. That was quite all."

He looked at her dazedly, like a man who has had a sudden, staggering blow.

"All?" he echoed hoarsely. "All? And I was fool enough to fancy it meant—everything. I've been in hell, Constance!" His voice was heavy with emotion. "I've suffered all the tortures of the damned. I'm starved for you, girl! You can't realize what I mean when I say I love you. It's torment! It's consuming flame! I've been half mad, at times. Don't think I haven't tried. I've fought it, but it's beaten me. I take the count. I've loved women before—but not like this. So—I've come for you."

She gazed at him with fear-widened eyes. As he spoke, she realized that her first crude passion was a thing of the past, that this handsome, specious creature inspired her only with a faint repulsion and distaste. The burden of a vain regret fell from her; she straightened herself, with a little laugh.

"I don't think I care for the cave-man stuff, Eugene," she said as lightly as she could. "Besides—I'm married."

With the perversity of inanimate objects at crucial moments, Mark's engine stalled when he was almost within sight of the lodge. Too impatient for delay, he strode forward afoot, with the intention of sending the capable Barnes back to struggle with it later. Somehow Constance's voice had seemed to hold a note of promise. Perhaps it was only fancy, born of desire, but he felt that he could not wait.

The sound of a man's voice came to him from above. Instinctively he paused to listen. This was almost virgin forest, and a human presence within its bounds was rare.

"I don't think you need have any scruples on the score of your precious husband," he heard the voice say sneeringly. "*He* hasn't any worth mentioning, I'm told. You see, I know something of Eric Kent by popular repute. He's pretty well known along the illumined way. And he's not the sort you should have married, Constance. I'm putting it mildly when I say he's a wastrel and a *roué*. He's the admitted lover of a notorious dancer in New York——"

"Please remember"—the listener recognized the voice as Constance's—"that you're speaking to his wife."

"In the eyes of the law, perhaps. But by the stronger law of nature, you are mine. What do I care for man-made ties, anyhow? I've tried to respect them, tried to give you up—but I can't, I won't. I don't love my wife; she never loved me; alimony will more than compensate her for the loss of me. I've a splendid opening in the Argentine. I'm going within the week. Come with me, Constance. We'll be married as soon as they divorce us. I shouldn't urge this if you'd married a different type of man, but a rounder like Eric Kent——"

"Stop!" Constance ordered. "It isn't true. Don't believe it. Though, if you proved it, it wouldn't alter my feelings. He's the truest gentleman I've ever known, the finest, knightliest——"

"I see," Sears said nastily. "You've fallen for the soft stuff he hands out indiscriminately to the Broadway chorus beauties. You—— I beg your pardon, Constance. That was pretty raw. But—you've given me rather a facer. I felt so sure of you. This opening seemed providential—and now—— Come with me, Constance, dear-

est! This is our chance for happiness. Out there, where we're unknown, we can live and love——"

"But I don't love you, Eugene," Constance interposed coldly. "I never loved you. It was only a romantic, girl-ish fancy."

"Constance!" The word had the intensity of a cry. "Don't say that, dearest! You do love me! You must! You shall! You can't care for this—this wastrel! He's not worthy of you. You love me—me! You're mine, and I mean to have you! You've got to love me!"

He caught her hands savagely and drew her roughly toward him.

Mark Kent walked quietly into the scene. He was smiling, but his eyes frightened Constance.

"I'm the unworthy husband," he said pleasantly. "Don't you think you'd better go before—er—things happen?"

Sears was startled, but he was no physical coward. He faced Mark truculently.

"I'll go, of course," he said. "I came here under a misapprehension. I misinterpreted your wife's letter——"

"A single line, simply stating that I was to be married that evening," Constance interpolated.

"But, in the circumstances——" Sears insinuated. He was not altogether the cad, but the sharp pain of his bitter disappointment wrung from him words of which he was ashamed even as he uttered them.

"I think," Mark reminded with dreadful distinctness, "I think I told you to go."

Sears turned, with a slight bow, to Constance.

"With Constance's permission——" he began.

Mark's hands clenched; control slipped a cog.

"Get out of this, you cur!" he said thickly. "I'd like to batter you to pulp—and I can't hold myself much longer! Go while the going's good!"

Again Sears glanced at Constance. Her eyes met his steadily.

"You've no right," she said quietly, "to presume on the fact that I once cared for you. I don't, any longer. Won't you please go?"

He read in her face the hopelessness of his quest. Had she let him see that she loved him, had he even fancied that she cared, he would have fought to the death for her, but against the utter indifference in her eyes, he was powerless.

"I'm sorry," he said simply. "I apologize."

He stepped into his waiting car, backed it around, and drove away without a rearward glance.

Constance and Mark stood watching him out of sight. Then they faced each other in helpless embarrassment. There was an awkward silence, which Mark broke.

"Constance," he said, "I want to thank you for—for standing up for me just now. But I don't deserve it. I haven't played straight with you. I—I'm *Markham Kent*."

A swift flash of an emotion he could not interpret crossed her face and vanished. She did not speak.

"Eric found it impossible to marry you," Mark went on. "He had—er—other obligations. So——"

"So you martyred yourself to save my reputation?"

"I seized the chance of winning what I most desired."

"Which is a polite way of saying that when Eric failed me, you cast yourself into the breach."

"I was only too happy," he protested.

"Chivalry!" she mocked.

"Something more. I'll own that, in the circumstances, I should have felt it my duty to offer my name to any woman who needed it. But in this case duty and inclination ran together. I loved you the moment I saw you first. All my life I had been living up to

the time when I should find you. Then—one day at church—I saw you. You were my dream come true. I had never loved another woman; I gave you all there was of me to give. I knew you were the one woman in the world for me, and I somehow felt that Fate meant us to belong. So, when the chance came, I took it.

"You took me on sufferance," she persisted willfully.

"Constance, Constance," he cried desperately, "won't you believe that I love you, that I want you, that I'm mad for you? Haven't you seen what a fight I've been putting up to—to keep my promise? Haven't you realized what a struggle it's been when—when every fiber of me yearned for you? I've tried not to presume, tried to remember that I'd no right to so much as touch you——"

She lifted her lashes quickly and as quickly let them fall, but he could have sworn that there was laughter in her eyes.

"You succeeded," she said demurely, "reasonably well."

"I love you, Constance!" he swept on. "I shall always love you! As long as there's a spark of life in me, it's yours. You're all there is in the world for me. But—it's your happiness that matters. I won't hold you against your will. I think we've scotched the scandal all right, and you can have your freedom as soon as you like."

She glanced up at him. His head was high; his face, in the gathering dusk, showed white and set. She loved its every line and contour. The dumb misery in his eyes touched her. A tide of tenderness almost maternal swept her close to him, so close that she felt he must hear the quickened beat of her heart. Unconsciously she caught, and clung desperately to, a button on his coat; as instinctively he laid a hand over the trembling little fingers.

"Please," she whispered, so low that he bent to catch the words, "I don't want to be free—Mark!"



FIRST TIMES

THE night my lips were yours
For the first time—the hour
I kept my willing hand
Unasked within your own—
The first time that your name
Was on my lips, a flame——

Last things may fade and go.
No memory
Can keep farewells, we know,
Forever. But these three—
Oh, can it ever be
That they will cease to wake
This poignant, new heartbreak?

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.



Encouraging a Blaze

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "How Often Can One Love?" "Philandering Husbands," etc.

A pointed parable. The blaze is matrimonial, of course.

IT seems to me that I have worse luck than any one I know with my fires," writes a seeker after household information. "I work and work over them, but all I gain for my pains is a pair of smudged hands, an acrid smell in my nostrils, and stinging tears in my eyes. Some of my friends tell me that I don't use enough kindling. Others say that they believe in hurrying up a blaze by the careful use of kerosene. But one of them who used that method had an explosion last fall, and I'm a little afraid to try it. What do you advise?"

Starting a fire is a fine art, a very fine art, and one of the difficulties is that almost every one thinks it a mere matter of instinct. The lady who has been half blinded by the fumes of her unsuccessful attempts in fire building has progressed one stage toward the mastery of the art—she has learned that it is something more than the casual juxtaposition of a little crushed paper, a stick or two, and a log.

The first question to be considered is, of course, the purpose of the fire. There is more than one sort, and the woman who is desirous of information in regard to fire building must know which sort she wants. There is the pretty little blaze that looks well at tea

time, for example. It is a matter of red and amethyst and topaz lights playing opalescently upon brass andirons and seeming to indulge in a game of hide-and-seek with the candles on the mantelshelf. It is a property of decoration merely, but that does not mean that it is therefore to be despised. On the contrary. To keep a pretty little fire of that sort going—never letting it die out, never letting it grow uncomfortably hot—is to add a bit of ornament to a world which has no superfluity of prettiness.

Still, it is quite a different fire to lay and maintain from the good, useful, beautiful hearthfire of our ancestors—that blaze that warmed the cold with its heat, that gladdened the sad with its cheer, that fed the hungry from the generous pot that swung upon its crane, that taught the children, lighting their horn books as they lay beside it before they climbed the ladder to the chilly beds in the attic—that was, in short, the very heart and center of an abundant life. The woman who wants to build such a one needs other material and another method of ignition from the one whose fire is merely meant to beautify the drawing-room for an hour or so in the afternoon or the evening. She needs to be something of an expert

in woods for that fire, as well as in the mechanics of fire laying. It will not be enough to discourse to her upon the subtle differences between the wigwam school of fire making, where the kindling surrounds the wood to be ignited, and the log-cabin school, where the heavy logs lie foursquare upon the andirons, with the kindling concealed beneath them, or, perchance, laid boldly across their top ready to drop in at the psychological moment and start the permanent blaze.

The astute reader perceives, of course, that this is all mere parable. He, or she, realized so much from the very moment of reading the worried correspondent's letter, and, instead of the words there set down, substituted: "Can you tell me how to be popular with young men, or how to attract a desirable young man to want to marry me? I am of such and such age"—entirely suitable for matrimony. "I am of such and such general appearance and attainments"—entirely suitable for matrimony. "I want to be married and to have a home of my own, but no one asks me. Lots of girls who aren't so good-looking or so intelligent or so amiable, and who don't even seem to want to be married as much as I honestly do, have had two or three beaux to my none. Some of them have married.

"Is it true that I am too stand-offish with young men? Some of my friends say so. They say that I make them afraid of me. I don't know how I do it. To be sure, I have been brought up not to let boys 'take liberties,' and the girls I know say I am old-maidish on that account. I do wish you would advise me. Would I be more of a success if I wore my blouses open to my chest bone and my skirts halfway up to my knees, and painted my cheeks, and used a lip stick? Would I get on better if I didn't feel that I ought to be engaged before I let a boy kiss me?

I really want to be married, not just to chase around to dances and picnics and have a good time, though I like that well enough, too. But—how much encouragement does a young man need?"

The trouble with parables is that they are never quite complete and thoroughgoing. Love may very properly be likened to a blaze, and it is not false analogy to regard the kinds of blaze and the approved methods of starting them. But shall the young man to be enkindled justly be likened to a log of wood? And if he is, what difficulties immediately confront the young woman who honestly confesses that, in spite of all the new talk about careers and economic independence, she wants to marry and to have a home of her own! For while there are experts to decide upon the qualities of wood—its hardness, its softness, its resistance to flame, its heat-giving powers in comparison with coal, and the like—who can tell about the qualities of a young man? Very seldom the girl who wants to marry him! And she is even less often disposed to take the counsel of her elders on the subject.

It is almost useless to try to start a matrimonial blaze with a soft and unseasoned wood. Nothing is easier in the world to do than to kindle a fire with such material, but it leaps into the air with a bright and lively effect and—pouf!—it is gone flaring up the chimney while your back is turned. But there isn't one girl in a hundred who has any test for the masculine quality that may be likened to oak or hickory. Even if she has had the advantage of having been brought up under the eye of an oak or hickory father, and of being surrounded by oak or hickory brothers, she may, in the critical moment of starting her own little domestic blaze, be beguiled by some white pine, capable of blazing easily, aromatically, and hotly for a while, and going out in a few minutes. She may

even, if she has been overdosed with the oak and hickory masculine qualities, rebelliously decide that it is a white-pine blaze that she wants. She will learn better by and by, but only after much blackening and blistering of her fingers in the unpleasant process of relaying the fire on the hearth.

She has to run her chances, then, in her choice of material for laying the domestic fire. But as she is American, they are more than even that she will find a good, durable sort of stuff; and she being, in addition, as it would appear, blessedly "middle class," her chances are even better. So much having been decided, and the kind of young man being left in the hands of a reasonably benignant Fate, how shall she proceed? Shall she follow the advice of her friends and "encourage" the object of her experimentation in ways foreign to her own ideas of propriety? Shall she exhibit all her charms, exert all her lures, let him learn by experience how soft and sweet her caresses are, how thrilling her lips? Shall she surround the good, stout piece of material to be inflamed with all the little kindling tricks in the feminine repertory, add a dash of kerosene for good luck, apply the match, and await the result?

Well, the best fire builders are chary of kindlings, despising those who stuff the fireplace with old newspapers, shavings, light woods, and all the rest. For the best fire builders have learned the one great lesson in fire building—namely, that it is oxygen that blazes and not materialistic, lifeless bulk. More fires are killed by choking than by underfeeding. Kindling there must be, of course, but any Boy Scout or

Camp-fire Girl will tell you, scorning your ignorance, how little, how very, very little, is necessary to start the pure, bright flame leaping when all your conditions are right—when your wood is seasoned, or even seasonable, when the air is clear and there are channels for it to rush through. It is oxygen that burns; it is the spirit that flames in love. You may smother any fire by well-meant, mistaken efforts to encourage it; you may suffocate any delicate fancy of the heart and soul by trying to increase it with mere food for the senses.

But that, perturbed maiden, is not to say that a good fire may be made to result from sweeping the hearthstone clear, polishing the andirons, placing the ultimate log geometrically across them, and waiting for a miracle to set it aflame. That is not to say that the average normal, healthy young male of the species will fall desperately in love with the young woman who keeps him at arm's length as a scoundrelly, Lovelace sort of person, when he was merely trying to act like an ordinary, friendly human being.

Learn to be friends with men. Don't be forever eying their casual cordialities as if they intended insult. For the most part, they intend no such thing, and they have a decent resentment against the girl who suspects sinister motives in their friendlinesses. Don't permit "liberties," but for Heaven's sake, don't anticipate them! To do that is to do more than remove all the little necessary kindlings from the hearth—it is to brick it up. And, by some necromancy, it will prove to be your own heart and life that are walled up inside, to wither and decay.





THE PALPITATING HEART

by

William Hamilton Osborne

Author of "The Red Mouse," "The Catspaw," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON GRANT

She was bewilderingly adorable, but she was a chip of the old block and simply had to have excitement, the unusual, irregularity. When her husband failed to keep her "on edge," there seemed nothing for it but divorce.

WHEN Larry Hastings married Victoria Lee, he had to pluck her, bodily almost, from the outstretched and imploring arms of a dozen suitors more or less, all of whom she loved impartially, all of whom loved her to the limits of distraction—none of whom, however, would have married her. Victoria was too exasperatingly attractive to marry; she was useful because she was so delightfully ornamental, in mind as well as in body. A splendid animal was Victoria—and a super-splendid human being.

Old Jack Lee, her father, opposed her match with Larry. She dashed into his den, where he sat helpless, nursing a gouty leg, and plumped down on the arm of his chair, her heart palpitating with excitement.

"Larry Hastings did it!" she exclaimed. "I'm going to marry him!"

Old Jack Lee admired splendid humanity, but at his age he didn't enjoy having a hundred and thirty pounds of agility fling itself upon him; he was unpleasantly weighted by his own superfluity of avoirdupois as it was. So he merely grunted, untwined Victoria's perfectly modeled arms from about his face and head, gasped for breath, drew himself together, and finally succeeded

in pushing his offspring beautiful on to the seat of a nearby chair.

"Why Larry Hastings?" he demanded surlily.

Victoria pouted.

"Why *not* Larry Hastings?" she returned.

"Because," exclaimed Jack Lee, "because I say no!"

Victoria pouted some more.

"And why do you say no?"

Old Jack Lee pounded the floor with his stick.

"I say no because Larry Hastings is a traveling man. I know traveling men—I'm wise to all their games. I used to be a traveling man myself."

Victoria was interested.

"What did you use to do?" she queried.

Old Jack snorted.

"I didn't do it," he retorted swiftly, nursing his affected knee, "but I learned a whole lot from inference and observation. I saw what the rest of the bunch did; you can bank on that."

"What did they do?" persisted Victoria.

Jack Lee, who had confounded the traveling man of his time with the traveling man of to-day—and who attributed to the latter all the bewildering

vices of the former—sidestepped the question.

"I'll tell you about Larry Hastings," he went on. "He sells small structural-iron bridges—that's what he does—to counties and to railroads and to millionaires—bridges for ditches and culverts and little streams. That's his line. And he meets boards of freeholders, God help him!—and you know what they are."

"Tell me," commanded Victoria.

"And," proceeded Jack Lee, "he meets county engineers and city engineers and town engineers and mayors of cities and governors of States, God help him!—and you know what they are. And—and millionaires, God help him!—and you know what they are."

"Education in the line of millionaires not sufficiently complete," sighed Victoria, her heart palpitating.

"And," went on her father, "Larry Hastings entertains these fellows and they entertain him—and that's the way he makes a sale. I know."

"Yes," still insisted Victoria, "but what do they do?"

"Everything," thundered old Jack Lee, "that can be done from business hours one day up to business hours the next—and then some!"

"Larry," returned Victoria, "doesn't do 'em. He's not dissipated in the least. He always looks fresh—and fine—and handsome."

"When he sees you, he does. That's the devil of it. He can get away with it. But I know the game, and I say no. And I'm saying no for your sake. I don't want you to find out too late what a traveling man is like."

"I've got to find out some time," protested his daughter, "and the only way I can find out is to marry Larry Hastings. And that, I'm just a little bit afraid, is what I'm going to do."

She did it. But she did it on the sly. Old Jack Lee had been dead in earnest when he had opposed this match.

His old-time experience had taught him that the way of the traveling man was the way of the transgressor, and that it was hard not so much for the traveler as for his wife. He set his face against Larry Hastings. So Larry took Victoria's quivering form into his eager arms at dusk one day, and sought a clergyman. The knot was tied.

"All right," growled old Jack Lee as he nursed his leg. "None of my doing. She'll get enough of him. Watch out."

Ruminating over the certain iniquity of Larry Hastings, old Jack suddenly chuckled to himself.

"Gosh hang it all," he exclaimed to himself, "if it wasn't for this bum knee of mine, I'd like to go out and sell a bill of goods to a board of aldermen myself!"

Instead of which, he died. He didn't die until after Larry and his bride had returned from a glorious honeymoon, and he made it clear to them in his last hours that it wasn't the shock of their marriage that had killed him—it was his leg. But he had a heart-to-heart talk with Larry before he departed on his long, long journey.

"Hastings, my boy," he said, tapping his knee while he gasped for breath, "this is what you'll come to when you're fifty—if you don't amend your ways." He poked Larry in the ribs. "Sly dogs—sly dogs, my boy! We're all alike—once a traveling man, always. God-frey, but I'd like to sell a bill of goods now—to a governor, for instance!"

The day after the funeral, Larry sadly shook his head, but on his own account this time.

"I've got to get back into harness," he told Victoria. "They're good enough to say that they've missed my work on the road. I've got to beat it Monday, little one."

Victoria's heart fluttered. They had been together for six weeks or more. Here was a new situation to be wres-



"Larry Hastings did it!" she exclaimed.
"I'm going to marry him!"

tled with; a first parting was a new sensation, one not, strange to say, altogether unpleasant. But she pouted just the same. She caught him and held him to her and looked into his eyes.

"Tell me everything you do when you're on these trips," she said.

"Why don't you come along and see," he urged.

But she only shook her head.

"I'd miss one glorious thing," she

told him. "I'd miss the longing for you to come back."

Larry was away four weeks—and then some more—and then again some. He wired twice to explain his inability to get back on time. But this prolonged absence didn't worry Victoria; it kept her constantly on edge, and to be on edge was, with Victoria, to be happy. Besides, her one-time suitors dropped in, first, to talk about old Jack Lee, and, second, to tell her what a

fine fellow Larry Hastings was, and, third, to impress upon her that he was darned sight luckier than he deserved to be, the dub. They all made love to her, and she liked it.

And then, like a whirlwind, back came Larry—and swung her off her feet and into a fever heat of ecstatic bliss.

Six times that year Larry left her, always on the jump, and came back to her, clear eyed and fit and tender, to find her as bewildering as ever.

"What gets into you that makes you so—so"—Larry floundered about for words and didn't find them—"so—so—while I'm away," he finally concluded.

"It's the waiting for you to come back," whispered Victoria of the palpitating heart.

Next morning Larry left her, tousled of hair, flushed of face, and wonderfully happy, while he went down to the works to make his report. No sooner had he entered the door and hung up his hat than he was summoned to the president's private room. There he found the directors in close conclave and himself the center of a conspiracy—in fact, the victim of one, though he did not recognize himself as such.

"Hastings," said the president, "you've out-Heroded Herod in the last twelve months. You've oversold us almost from here to eternity. How do you account for it?"

Larry smiled.

"I put a whole lot of pep into me by getting married. I just couldn't help selling everything we had."

The president handed him a check.

"That's yours, my boy," he said. "No—no thanks. You've earned it. There's something else. A married man like you ought to have an inside job. We're handing you one, with the compliments of the board. Read the resolution, Sam."

Sam read it. It made Larry one of the active vice presidents of the concern, at a salary that would have put an ordinary man's eye out. Only Larry wasn't thinking of the salary.

"God bless you, white men!" he said, with faltering voice. "Now I can——"

"Yes," said the president, chuckling, "now you can be with her all the time. God bless you both—devil take you, Larry Hastings!"

And the devil took him, as you shall hear—took him by surprise.

It was little more than a year later that Victoria, her veil drawn down over her finely chiseled features, tripped into the law offices of Longstreet & Smith.

She saw Longstreet; he was an old friend of her father's. She raised her veil and flashed her loveliness upon him. She was very lovely, for her heart was going pit-a-pat.

"Well, my dear," he said, "and what's the trouble now?"

Victoria flushed, and became lovelier than ever.

"It's about my husband, Lawrence Hastings," she announced. "I've come to ask you to get me a divorce."

Longstreet was genuinely distressed. He knew Larry well.

"What's he been up to, the rascal?" he exclaimed sharply. "He ought to be horsewhipped—a man who's got a girl like you! What's he done?"

"Nothing," returned Victoria with a dolorous sigh, "nothing. He simply doesn't love me any more. He—he's as indifferent as—as that bunch of paper there."

"Not a good simile!" exclaimed old Longstreet. "That's my brief in the Bunker murder case—a very lively bunch of paper, I assure you. But, to get back to Larry—he's just indifferent. What does he do—what doesn't he do? Give me something to work on, please."

"I should think that was enough—to have your husband just like a"—she

was going to refer to the bunch of paper once more, but Longstreet waved her off—"just like a stick of wood!"

"If he used a stick of wood—on you—instead of being one, I might help you, my dear," said Longstreet kindly, "but as it is——"

"But," she spluttered, "it's all arranged. Larry will give me the divorce. He's to pay your fee, and you are to get me the divorce."

Longstreet's eyes glittered dangerously. The blood crept up above his collar and spread across his face. If any ordinary woman had come into his office with such a proposition, he would have escorted her, with muscular firmness, to the door. But Jack Lee's daughter was different. Besides, she didn't know.

"So it's all arranged," he said, smiling in spite of his indignation. "And on what ground do you intend to get your divorce?"

"Isn't that—for you to worry about?" she smiled.

"In this State," returned her counsel gravely, "there is but one ground for divorce. Has—has—your husband arranged also for—that, my dear?"

Victoria paled.

"Dear me," she exclaimed, "I shouldn't—I really shouldn't like to have him arrange for that! But you don't seem to understand, Mr. Longstreet. Larry consents to my getting a divorce."

"But the State does not," said Longstreet, rising. "I wish indeed," he added, "that I could be of service—some other kind of service—to the daughter of my old friend Jack Lee. As it is——"

"But—what am I to do?" pouted Victoria.

"I decline to advise you," said Longstreet crisply. "You must find out that yourself."

Victoria found out for herself. She found out from Larry. She dragged

her way home that evening, tired, dispirited.

"You can tell me what to do," she implored of Larry.

Larry sighed. He looked her over. There was no sparkle in her eye, no life in her pretty face. Utter weariness was upon her. Larry handed her a typewritten list of States and cities.

"There are places in the West—there are places near at hand. You can get a divorce in any one of those States. It'll take some time. It'll be slow, but we can make it sure." He took out his check book. "Make your selection," he added, "and I shall be glad to do the rest. I beg your pardon—not glad."

She took the check and looked him over. Listless, lifeless—a stick of wood! It was unbearable, this life!

Months later, he rushed, half frenzied, into the office of his president.

"For cat's sake," he cried, "I can't sit still! This office gets on my nerves! I can't dictate a decent letter to save my neck! I've got to get away!"

The president nodded.

"Go to it, young 'un," he returned. "You've been going stale for some weeks. And you're not Larry Hastings unless you're fresh. Have a good time."

Larry went. He didn't go to have a good time. He had an intense desire to know what was happening out West, coupled with an insatiable longing to see his wife without being seen himself.

He dropped in to see a law firm in a Western city. He saw a member of the firm.

"Well," he demanded—and, as he talked, there was a look of unutterable longing in his eyes that made even a hardened divorce lawyer wince—"how's she coming? Are they making any kind of progress on the other side?"

His counsel nodded.

"They cleaned her up at one sitting," he responded. "Proved incompatibil-

ity of temper and all the other little things that our statute calls for. We appeared for you, to give this court jurisdiction. The decree nisi was entered yesterday——"

"The final," interposed Larry, "takes six months longer, as I understand?"

He was quite right, they informed him.

"Don't anticipate it, though," they warned him. "Don't get married again until we give you leave."

"Don't worry," returned Larry Hastings sadly. "I don't expect to get married again, not at the end of six months or at the end of sixty. I'm through for good and all. By the way," he added, "where is my wife? Is she still here?"

"Probably here," his counsel said. "Her counsel, Butler & Breed, don't monkey with the law. They make their clients live here—here—from start to finish. We'll call them up and see."

They called up. She was at the Indian Queen.

"The great divorce-colony hotel," they told Larry. "Gay place, too. If you want to send her any word, we'll have her lawyers pass it on."

Larry said no. All he wanted was to know where she was. He was glad that she was making her residence stick. He didn't want any slip-up in the divorce proceedings, on her own account as well as his.

He handed them another check and left. After dinner he dressed and left his own hotel and sauntered up the hill to the Indian Queen. It was a very classy place. It was perched upon a knoll that overlooked the city. As Larry mounted toward it, soft music wafted itself down toward him. As he drew nearer, he became aware of a sound of revelry by night—revelry unmistakable. The ballroom was ablaze with light. Larry checked his hat and coat and pressed on. The entrance to the ballroom was choked by onlookers. It was early. Six or eight couples were

dancing—quite indecently, as is the vogue—and Larry, bored, but expectant, passed on, searching the lobbies and the dinner room with his glance.

Victoria was nowhere to be seen, and Larry, fidgeting, seated himself in a dark corner and smoked a cigarette. Finishing it, he fidgeted some more, and rose and looked about him once again. He was uneasy. He had no business here, he knew that well. But something more than idle curiosity impelled him to catch a glance of Victoria if he could. He didn't want to meet her, he didn't want to spy upon her, but he wanted to look on her once again—to see how she was standing it all. He lunged to the desk.

"Mrs. Hastings?" he queried.

They called up her room, but there was no response.

"We'll have her paged," they suggested.

But no. Larry said he'd lounge about and find her somewhere. He sauntered back to the ballroom. The floor was filled with couples now. Fashionable indecency was swinging madly to and fro.

And suddenly he saw her. She was sitting in a corner of the big room, half hidden by the pillows of the window seat upon which she sat. She was looking on—listlessly. While Larry watched, a man left the crowd that was jammed in about the door, crossed the room, and asked her to dance. She declined, with a weary little shake of her head. But her smile was grateful enough. Another man, a clean, strong-looking, blond youth, stepped up to try his luck; and then another, and another. Persistently, but politely, Victoria declined to dance. Larry wondered why. The number ended, and the couples surged toward the door. Victoria maintained her seat, glancing about her from time to time, still listlessly, almost dull eyed.

Suddenly the music started up again.

It was wonderful music—languorous, sensuous. Larry felt it creeping into his blood. Again the floor filled with its throbbing couples—and again a man approached Victoria. This time she yielded, graciously enough. Larry watched her as they swung out upon the floor. She was a wonderful dancer.

Suddenly she saw him. Without a word of apology, she left her partner standing dumb-struck in the middle of

love to dance!" she exclaimed, nervously drawing him to his feet. "Come!"

Larry drew back.

"You—and I!" he faltered. "Looks funny, doesn't it?"

"I never thought of it," she laughed. "Then, let's go up to my room. Nobody'll see us there, at any rate."

"But——" faltered Larry.

"Come," she insisted.

He obeyed. At the elevator door,



"But," she spluttered, "it's all arranged.

Larry will give me the divorce."

the floor, and walked direct to Larry. She put her hand upon his arm and raised a face suddenly gone feverish to his. Her eyes glowed.

"Larry!" she cried.

That was all she had to say just then. She dragged him to a seat behind a mass of foliage. She was quivering with excitement.

"Larry," she cried again, "it's been so dull—it's been devilish! Oh, it's good to see you again!"

Larry smiled grimly.

"Devilish enough in there," he said, with a jerk of his head toward the ballroom, "but far from dull, it seems to me."

"Come, let's go back and dance. You

they met a man, a black-browed individual, who regarded her with some surprise and who bowed coolly to her. This man watched the two enter the elevator, and then stepped up to the desk, scribbled a note and directed that it be left in Mrs. Hasting's box.

Three floors above, Victoria, clinging to Larry's arm, drew him to her dainty suite of rooms. She flashed on the light. She flung herself on a divan and lay there, devouring him with glistening eyes. Larry blinked and looked about him.

On a small enameled desk lay a document covered with a brown cover. Larry glanced at it and drew its counterpart from his breast pocket.

"Well," he said slowly, "you have your first decree."

She did not hear him.

"Larry," she cried. She clutched at him, drew him down to her. "I've waited long—so very long, for you," she whispered. "Listen—do you hear my heart beat? That's all for you."

Larry knelt by her—he held her in his arms—he gloated over her. But he wondered at her. From the listless woman he had parted from so many months ago, from the listless woman he had watched in the ballroom a short time ago, she had leaped suddenly into a dazzling, bewildering, tantalizing, fetching bit of womanhood.

The next morning she entered the offices of Butler & Breed, her local counsel. She saw Breed. He eyed her with a disapproving glance.

"You left me a note last night to see you here this morning," she remarked, handing him the slip of paper he had indited at the hotel the night before.

Breed nodded and waved her to a seat.

"Mrs. Hastings," he began, "this firm, of all the firms in this God-forsaken divorce-law State, has got the reputation of putting through decrees by methods that are straight. We don't care what our confrères at the bar do—we play the game according to the rules.

"Now I don't want to know anything about the man you took up to your room last night—nor what you took him there for. You have the right to take anybody that you please to your suite at the Indian Queen, and to entertain him there. It's done and it's done all the time. I haven't seen this man in town before, and I have jumped, perhaps unwarrantably, to the conclusion that perhaps you intend to marry him.

"But what I want to say is this: You've got to play this game straight. If you don't, you'll get yourself into

a hole, and by doing that you'll get us into a hole. This decree that was entered the other day doesn't free you—not by a jugful! You've got six months more of single blessedness before you, and that six months too often is a trap. Pardon me for talking like a Dutch uncle to you, but one day you may thank me for the warning. A decree nisi is only a decree nisi. It's not the whole show. Kindly conduct yourself accordingly. Be discreet."

"I am invariably discreet," said Victoria loftily.

Breed had a mental picture of her as she had been the night before—her glowing eyes, her clinging clasp. He smiled grimly.

Victoria, having failed to squelch him with a look, proceeded now to do it with words.

"Your insinuations are not warranted by the facts, Mr. Breed," she told him, haughtily. "The man I entertained last evening at the Indian Queen is not the man I'm going to marry. I am not engaged to him—and never shall be. That man is my husband—Larry Hastings."

Breed rose to his feet.

"Good Lord!" he groaned. The look in his eyes reminded her of her father's friend and lawyer, Longstreet.

"What did he come for?" demanded Breed.

Victoria flushed painfully.

"To—to pay me my alimony," she returned.

"Madame," said Breed with cold politeness, "in the future let your husband pay his alimony to his lawyers, as he has done in the past. They will pay us. We shall account to you. In the future, decline to see your husband at every opportunity. You understand?"

Victoria's eyes still glowed.

"I understand," she returned.

"You still desire this divorce suit to proceed?" queried Breed.

"Emphatically—yes!" exclaimed Victoria. She left.

At the Indian Queen, a telephone call from Larry was awaiting her. She got him on the wire.

"I'm coming up," he said.

She declined to let him. Breed's warning was too fresh to permit of that.

"Then you come down here," suggested Larry.

That wouldn't do.

"Well?" said Larry while she pondered.

"Let's—let's go somewhere out of town," she said.

"All right," said Larry. "Colorado Springs—that's far enough away."

They went to Colorado Springs. It was glorious.

"We've got a perfect right to go, too," she assured Larry, as they held hands in the Pullman. "We're still husband and wife."

"Traveling under assumed names, as you insist," protested Larry.

"That adds the finishing touch," she cried.

Larry glanced at her eagerly.

"Do you—do you still want this divorce?" he demanded.

She made him the same answer that she had given Breed. "Emphatically—yes!" she said.

A week later, they returned and separated. Larry found a wire waiting for him. It was a day old and was from his firm. He was needed in New York forthwith. He packed at once and jumped aboard a train, leaving Victoria a hasty note. She kissed it fervently, read it calmly, and sat down, with her hands in her lap, to wait for six months to roll away.

Larry, once he reached the East, found that his concern had become involved in a snarl down in Georgia that refused to come untangled. He jumped upon another train and spent a month in the South. When he came back, he found further complications. The selling end of the concern was going to

the devil. His superhuman efforts kept his nose to the grindstone for months.

But the more he worked, the more he thought about Victoria and Colorado Springs. At night he woke suddenly, talking to her, talking to himself: "Do you want this divorce suit to proceed?" "Emphatically—yes!" He could almost hear her say it. Why did she want it to proceed, after that trip to Colorado Springs? He couldn't understand it.

Longstreet, Jack Lee's old personal counsel, waylaid him at his club and drew him into a corner of the card room which was deserted at the time.

"Worries you, doesn't she?" he demanded.

Larry admitted that she did.

"Have you seen her since she started her suit?" queried the lawyer, eyeing Larry shrewdly and puffing on his long black cigar.

Larry admitted that he had—and he said when.

"Now," said Longstreet, holding up his forefinger, "I'll tell you just about what happened." And he did—almost.

Larry turned white—then red.

"How did you know?" he queried.

"I know," said Longstreet, "because I know Victoria, and because I knew Jack Lee, her father. There's one thing that both of 'em hated—and that Victoria still hates."

"And that?" demanded Larry.

"Wait a bit," said Longstreet, holding up his hand. "Tell me something—why did Victoria want to get this divorce? What happened at home?"

Larry shook his head.

"Nothing," he returned. "Everything went as smoothly as you'd want."

"Ah," mused Longstreet, "as smoothly as I'd want. But smoothness wasn't wanted, very likely not by you yourself—certainly not by Victoria. Hastings, in the soul of old Jack Lee was planted a love of the irregular.



"Pardon me, but is there a clergyman in town?"

Excitement was his meat and drink. He was lured by the unusual. Victoria's got that palpitating heart. She must feel or she will die. Jack had a bit of the Old Nick in him or he'd have been alive to-day. Victoria hasn't, but she's got a whole lot of Jack Lee in her and it won't wash out. She wants irregularity, even in her life with you. She was happy just so long as you could come home after a few weeks on the road—happier, even, if your return had been delayed. She was happy when she didn't know just when she'd see you next—and when she got you, then she jumped. The palpitating heart—it's a pretty seductive kind of organism, after all."

"You bet your life it is!" said Larry.

He rushed back to the works—rushed into the president's sanctum.

"Chief," he said, "I'm all in. I've got to take a vacation. But I won't loaf. Give me something—anything—to sell, anywhere—just so long as it's out West."

His chief looked him in the eye.

"Hastings," he said, "you like to sell, don't you?"

"It's my middle name," breathed Larry.

"Your old job?"

"Give it to me, you good white man, give it back to me!"

"Thank the Lord you want it!" cried the president. "We've been thinking of forcing it on you for the past three months or so. We want a man out in that territory, instead of a stick of wood. Go to it, Larry boy!"

Larry flew as flies the crow to the home town of the Indian Queen Hotel. He called up Mrs. Hastings. He got her on the wire.

"Larry!" she cried, all up in the air, all on edge.

"Listen," he said, "I'm going up through the Canadian Rockies. It'll take a month or so. Do you want to come along."

"This is a business trip," he told her, as they sped along, "and I'm Larry

Hastings all along the line. Remember that."

"I'm game," she answered. "Anything you say."

At the first stop, Larry wired back to the Indian Queen, in Victoria's name, a list of her various destinations all along the line. He had his reasons for so doing. He chuckled as he did so.

It took them a week to reach the Glacier House at Glacier.

One of the women managers watched Larry register. Before assigning him the suite that he requested, she leafed over a batch of mail. Finally she held out a yellow envelope.

"Telegram for Mrs. Hastings," she announced. Then she handed a key to the little Jap bellman who stood waiting.

Larry took the telegram to Victoria, who sat waiting in a corner by a big, blazing log fire. Victoria stared at it in amazement.

"How did anybody know where I could be found?" she demanded.

Larry did not enlighten her.

"Open it," he suggested.

She opened it and read.

"You read it, too," she said.

Larry read it in silence:

Decree final entered this afternoon. Certified copy goes to you by this mail. Congratulations.

BUTLER & BREED.

Larry looked at her. Victoria looked at Larry. Neither spoke. Larry stepped up to the desk.

"Pardon me," he said, "but is there a clergyman in town?"

It was not a town, the manager explained—it was merely a hotel. There was no clergyman. There had been one among the guests, but he had taken his departure yesterday. Was there anything that they could do?

"Nothing," said Larry.

He went back to Victoria and reported.

The little Jap stood ready with their bags.

"You follow, please," he said.

Larry glanced at Victoria. They were standing close together. He could feel her heart palpitating against his arm. Her lips were parted—her breath came quick and fast. The Jap still waited.

"All right, we're coming!" exclaimed Larry. Then he bent over her. "Tomorrow," he told her, "we can go on to Banff, and be married in the afternoon."

And with her heart beating fast and furious against his arm, they followed the Jap bellman to their suite above.

Longstreet waylaid Larry one day as he arrived in town after a successful selling trip—one somewhat prolonged.

"Just left your wife," said Longstreet. "We talked about the Canadian Rockies. I've been through 'em, too. Victoria's crazy over Glacier. I can't see it myself. Banff for mine—I told her so. But no, not Banff for her. Glacier!"

"Funny, that," mused Larry. "We—we were remarried out at Banff."

"This time it ought to stick, my boy," said Longstreet, "now that you've got her dead to rights. While you're away, she doesn't know whether you're in a railroad wreck, or indulging in riotous living, or wasting your substance in a gambling hell—or whether you'll be home next week—or the next. That's life—for her. It keeps her all on edge."

"It's all right for her," protested Larry, "but as for me—I'd like to be hanging around her all of the time—and then some more. It's pretty rough on me."

"Gammon!" returned Longstreet. "You can stand it, all right. You're getting old, like all the rest of us."

"Old nothing!" spluttered Larry in indignation, as he tore himself away.

The FLIRTATION

BY
Anne O'Hagan

Author of
"Dreamers of Dreams,"
"A Measure of Love," etc.



A little story to set you guessing. Did Godfrey truly care for Elinor?

THE garden stretched, terrace by terrace, down to the bright waters of the bay. In June it was as brilliant, almost, as the Mediterranean. In June the flame of color behind it, up to the pillared loggia wreathed in rosy bloom, was almost as glorious as Italy's.

Elinor, pacing side by side with Godfrey through the pleasant walks, thought at first, as usual, of sea and sky and bowery paths—of all luxuriant nature, indeed—as fulfilling the purpose for which it had been created when it furnished so lovely and suitable a background for her beauty. But, as had happened every day during her visit, that feeling faded as she walked with Godfrey, and a sentiment, an emotion, more agitating held her from head to foot—from noble, simply coiffed, fair head to delicate, arched foot that moved with gliding grace despite the height of the heels that threw it forward. Elinor realized her type to be austere

beautiful as she looked in the mirror at her face, but her feeling for suitability ended before she reached the dressing of her feet, and she shod those like a worldly *marquise* or an imitative shop girl.

Above them, in the Italian palace that stretched itself and basked in the Long Island sun—the palace that Martin Schemer had built himself out of the proceeds of those scented by-products of grease known as toilet soaps—came the sound of a clear, high, sweet voice singing. It was Miriam's. Miriam, daughter of Martin, was to marry Godfrey in September.

The words of the song reached the two walking side by side. It was an old English poem set to music:

"I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honor more."

Godfrey and Elinor looked at each other. Their eyes were darkened by pain. Their breath fluttered forth in sighs.

"God!" breathed the man, after the best stage models.

"You do love her, Godfrey," said Elinor. She did not say it reproachfully.

"I love you," he answered roughly.

"Yes." The word as Elinor spoke it in her deep, earnest voice was music. It lay along the warm air like the sound of a violin. "Yes. For the week you have known me. But you have loved Miriam for years."

"The week I have known you! Do you measure what we have felt for each other by the same rule by which brokers measure their interest payments?"

"That is very pretty, Godfrey. But—suppose it has been eternity—this week—this wonderful week——"

"It has been eternity—infinity!"

"Then we have had it. And, Godfrey, you do love Miriam!"

"Oh, of course I love Miriam! I love my sisters, my mother! I love my dog! I love my little nephew, and I have a sincere attachment to my horse and my sloop! But what has any of these habitual loves to do with you and me?"

"She is so dear."

"Granted. She is."

"So generous, so confiding. See how she has thrown us together! See how she has insisted upon our learning to know and to care for each other! To hurt her would be unforgivable."

"But what of us? What of our love? Elinor, you know that we belong to each other."

"Not at the price of wounding that gentle heart," said Elinor, solemnly, sweetly. She turned her eyes from him and gazed out at the blue waters as she spoke. The pure outlines of her face were wonderful, seen in profile at that angle.

"Of course, it's because you're noble and true-hearted that I love you so," he conceded, "because you are you.

But I do love you, Elinor. You can't undo that. You can't deny it. You can't refuse to be led by love——"

"Yes, yes, I can! I do refuse! I must be led by rightness, Godfrey. I must be led by love, yes, by another love than the love of our eyes and our touch. I must be led by the love of truth and of kindness, the love of dear, trusting Miriam, and the love of your other self—your *selfless* self, Godfrey."

"Dear saint!" murmured Godfrey. "But do you think I shall submit to be read out of your life like that?"

She turned her eyes full upon him now. They were large, azure eyes and they were swimming now in beauty and tears.

"You will if you love me," she said.

"It's because I love you that I will not submit to be ruled out of it! Come, Elinor, be sensible. I'm engaged to your cousin, Miriam. I'm very fond of her. I have been fond of her for years—grew up alongside her, and all that—while you were living abroad in your convent school and your old palaces and all the places that have made you the wonder that you are—so different from all the girls I have known here. Well, you come home, and I meet you, and I realize that I've never had the slightest conception of what love means. Is a man to whom the noble Venus of Melos has revealed herself in her flesh-and-blood beauty going to give his worship to a bisque shepherdess on the mantelshelf? I'm not worthy of you, of course—I'm not worthy to tie the lacings of your shoes. But you've said that you love me, that the mighty force has seized you, too. We didn't seek it—it claimed us. And I'm at least too much a man, since I have known you, to commit sacrilege against love. We must tell Miriam the truth. She'll bear it like a good sport. She *is* a good sport——"

"And so am I!" cried Elinor, inter-

rupting. "I can bear my wounds as well as she can—better! Dear little butterfly Miriam! I will not accept happiness at the price of her pain."

"Her pain would be short-lived."

"Our happiness, built on disloyalty and selfishness, would be very short-lived."

"Does true love demand no loyalty? Shall we be false to that which we have known?"

So they argued over and over in the sunshine and the flowers, with the bright blue waters lapping the shore below them, and the music rippling from the long, gleaming white palace above them. Dearly they loved the sound of their own exalted sentiments. And by and by he confessed himself won over by Elinor's arguments. Because they loved each other so deeply, so truly, they must give each other up!

But up in her room, as she packed her things—she had sent away the maid whom Miriam had assigned to her, for she felt it inharmonious with her mood not to be alone—she wiped the tears from her eyes now and then.

"He didn't care!" she said again and again. "Oh, he didn't care! If he had loved me, he would never have let me go. If he had loved me, he would never have been persuaded by any arguments about Miriam. Miriam! He wouldn't have cared whether she lived or died. He didn't love me! He didn't love me!"

She threw into the bare fireplace the withered flower he had kissed last night when they had danced together, and the note of the day before asking her to meet him in the cedar copse. She set a match to them and said again:

"He didn't love me! Love hasn't anything to do with being kind to any one else, or being true to any one else."

Down in her quarters, Miriam, daughter of Martin, was writing.

"It didn't work, Teddy darling. I'll have to take the blame on myself, after all—or you will. I thought they would surely fall for each other. Two of a kind! All nobleness and Shakespeare-for-the-masses and such. I simply hurled them at each other's heads. I suppose I overdid it. They did have a flirtation, I know, but, like a goose, I didn't take advantage of the first kiss to make a row and get myself out. I thought I'd like them to be happy. Besides, dad is so keen for Godfrey, and it would have been hard work to get my own way by reporting one kiss under the ramblers in the moonlight—which, of course, might happen to any one and is a mere waste of a good stage setting if it doesn't!

"But the thing didn't come off as I planned and hoped, and, instead, Godfrey is insisting upon an early wedding. Can't wait until September! I must have given him an overdose of sweetness and light in dear Elinor! However, there's nothing for it now but the rope ladder and Gretna Green—that is to say, I'll meet you in town Wednesday afternoon at two, at the City Hall, and we'll speed up to the Little Church Around the Corner, and then we'll telegraph dad.

"I'll write a sad little farewell note to Godfrey. I suppose it wouldn't be tactful to say that I did my damndest to provide him with a successor for me. I am sorry! When we are so happy, you and I, I should like every one else to be happy. But I shan't worry about it. Thank goodness, I'm not highbrow and analytical and all that sort of thing. I don't think people who are ever fall very deep in love, do you, Teddy darling? And I am fathoms deep in love, deep, deep, much too deep to care for any of the silly things that used to worry me, like loyalty and kindness and all that. Till Wednesday, then.

"MIRIAM THE BAFFLED PLOTTER."



ILLUSTRATED BY
CLARENCE ROWE

SYMPATHY COIN

by Marion Short

Author of "The Road of Dreams," "Purple and Gold," etc.

A story too good to talk about. Let it speak for itself.

ALTHOUGH her curly brown hair now showed gray in patches, and although she had grown maturely stout, Philip Carey recognized the vaudeville celebrity instantly as she tripped across the lobby of the Ordsley Hotel.

Fully five years had elapsed since Miss Dottie Dayton had glittered, danced, and sung before an audience of college boys in his own home town of Abingdon, but Carey, suffering from that crowd-induced loneliness which only a stranger marooned in a great city can understand, proceeded boldly to hail her by name and to remind her of their former slight acquaintance.

Perhaps because the blond young giant addressing her was such an attractive male being, or perhaps because she herself was lonely, Miss Dayton beamed delightedly at the mention of her conquest of freshman hearts on that far-away Abingdon occasion, and presently, with great affability, accepted Carey's invitation to join him at dinner.

"But how on earth, boy, did you happen to blow into this ramshackle old hotel, of all others?" she inquired in a slangy, "I-feel-as-if-I-had-known-

you-always" manner. "Pardon me," and she leaned her plump elbows on the table, "but your whole appearance, and the classy clothes you're sporting, show you don't belong in the shabby, bohemian Ordsley at all."

"Nonsense!" laughed Carey. "My Uncle Ben always puts up here, when in town, and insists I shall do likewise. And surely a hotel honored by the patronage of a theatrical star wearing a thousand-dollar bonnet ought to be good enough for a plain country chap like me."

Miss Dayton, flattered, straightened her big, beplumed hat.

"Dear me, this is only homemade camouflage. I rigged it up for a stock engagement last spring when vaudeville bookings were scarce——"

"Oh—er—how very stupid of me!" exclaimed a soft, interrupting voice.

The voice belonged to a slender, red-haired young woman who had dropped her hand bag in passing. Before she could stoop to pick it up, the young man from Abingdon sprang forward and restored it to her.

"Thank you—so much!" Her manner was sweetly timid as she gazed up

at him through the haze of her warm-colored hair.

"Not at all," said Carey, with his best ceremonious bow.

The strange young woman paused for a moment to nod and smile at Miss Dayton, then crossed the room to a corner table. She was clad in clinging gray, and the grace of her walk and figure caught Carey's eye.

"That's Miss Peggy Matthews, a professional artist's model," the vaudeville actress explained, under her breath. She had been rather helplessly fishing for a common topic of conversation and seized upon the first to present itself. "And," she continued, "that highbrow, foreign-looking chap two tables distant from her is Gilbert Weems, the novelist. They used to be great friends, but they don't speak now as they pass by, probably because he drinks too much. He wanted me to get Miss Matthews a job in vaudeville because she doesn't earn enough at posing to make both ends meet."

"Hard lines, isn't it?" remarked Carey. "But I should think a girl so pretty might find a good place on the stage if other things didn't pay."

Miss Dayton smiled pityingly.

"My dear boy, that's because you don't know what you're talking about. Permit me to inform you that ninety-nine girls out of a hundred who go in for a theatrical career fall down at it and wish they had learned typewriting or married George instead."

"Then, in that case," suggested Carey, "Uncle Ben might find a place for the girl in his downtown office, if she'd care for it. There's a lot of routine work to be done there. He's associated with father in the plate-glass business, you know, with headquarters here in New York."

"That's awfully sweet of you," responded Miss Dayton, "but I wouldn't dare suggest such a thing to Miss Matthews. You see she has never confided

in me—personally—and might resent my knowing anything at all about her private affairs."

With that, she turned and, from beneath the shelter of her hat, sent a scorching look toward the model.

"Don't think for a moment, young woman," that look said as plainly as words could speak, "that I'm not aware you dropped your hand bag on purpose, thinking I might introduce you to the man that's dining me. I'd advise you not to try such tactics again."

"Perhaps," suggested Carey unexpectedly, "it might be a good scheme for me to meet her and sound her on the subject myself. I believe I could do it without giving offense."

Miss Dayton, being an actress who knew how to act, received the unwelcome hint with a smile wide and bright.

"Think so? Then I'll be glad to introduce you. Miss Matthews generally floats round the lobby for half an hour or so each evening."

There would be no more dinner invitations, of course, with a rival who was really young bobbing up, and with one's hair dye giving out at the psychological moment! But it served her right, Miss Dayton told herself, for not having ignored the model utterly.

Unexpectedly, Carey was obliged to spend the next several evenings in the company of his sweetheart and her aunt, who had arrived in New York on a shopping tour, and the young man felt distinctly bored about it, even impatient. Why on earth had Mabel Bethune taken it into her head to appear on the scene just when he was engrossed with business—and Peggy? Since that memorable night when Miss Dayton had introduced them, he and the red-haired model had come to a wonderful understanding of each other, and now it seemed—as Peggy had put it—"as if they had been fast friends for years."

"I don't know why it is," she had



"Thank you—so much!" Her manner was sweetly timid as she gazed up at him.

said during a twilight stroll in Central Park, "but I can talk out my inmost heart to you as I've never been able to do with any other man. Perhaps it's because you're so big and broad-minded. Why, most young chaps wouldn't respect a girl at all after they found out she was posing for a figure model in the studios!"

Things had gone from bad to worse with Peggy lately. She had told him so, and that she needed his friendship now as never before. Only that very day at dinner, "Don't think me a coward—please," she had said to him, "but I'm frightfully discouraged. My folks have been writing me for money—and I haven't got it to send them. I can't

even earn enough to keep myself going. Last night—if I hadn't remembered what a good pal you've been to me—I'd have taken poison and killed myself."

What childlike, appealing eyes the girl had! He had never seen such eyes.

"Philip, what are you thinking of, may I ask?" and Carey came back to earth and the knowledge that he was sitting in a hotel parlor with Mabel and her aunt.

"Of what should I be thinking, Mabel, but you—and how pretty you look in that blue gown?" he replied, but even to himself the words sounded awkward and insincere.

Of course Mabel was all right in Abingdon, where she belonged, and when he returned to Abingdon in the course of a month or two, he expected to continue to regard himself as halfway engaged to her, but when a fellow was busy racking his brain to think out ways of helping a pal in distress, it was no time for sentiment and banal compliments.

Though aware of Carey's strange new indifference, Mabel, with the outer composure of a well-trained society girl, related pleasantly the several events of interest that had taken place in Abingdon during his absence, and her bright chatter did not cease until she had twice asked him a question and failed to receive an answer.

"If something is troubling you, Philip," she resumed sweetly, but in a tone that recalled his wandering attention, "you mustn't feel obliged to remain here to entertain auntie and me. We have our shopping lists to make out anyhow, you know, and——"

"I beg your pardon, Mabel," Carey exclaimed, shocked to realize that he had been guilty of the rudeness of inattention. "I didn't mean to act grouchy, but—but there's a fellow at my hotel I've hardly been able to get

out of my mind all evening. It isn't anything that can interest you, of course," he continued, flushing uncomfortably as Mabel's clear brown eyes seemed to penetrate almost to Peggy's hiding place in his brain, "but—well, he's desperate, and there's danger of his doing away with himself any minute. Naturally I feel sorry for the poor girl—er—fellow, I mean."

But quickly as he had covered his unfortunate slip of the tongue, it was yet not quickly enough.

"Of course—naturally," said Mabel, and was glad her aunt just then took up a conversation she felt unable to continue.

"If only it weren't another girl!" she said to herself, with a painful tightening of her heartstrings. "Oh, I knew nothing but another girl could make such a difference in his manner toward me!"

For the rest of the evening, it seemed to Carey that he was acting quite as usual. He aimed always to conduct himself as a gentleman should.

But Benjamin Mackworth, Carey's uncle at the Ordsley, took him quite violently to task a few days later.

"What's happened between you and the Bethunes? They left town before I'd had a chance to present my compliments—sending me a farewell note that didn't explain matters in the least." The old man, attired in his dressing gown and suffering from a stubborn attack of rheumatism, was lounging about in his apartment as he spoke. "Do you know why they hurried away like that?"

"I don't know at all," Carey answered truthfully, "and I've been wondering what the rush was myself."

"You didn't quarrel, then?"

"Bosh, Uncle Ben, of course not! Perhaps it was just that Mabel didn't care for New York, particularly, and grew homesick."

"Nonsense, boy!" and the old man's

white eyebrows drew together thoughtfully. "What girl ever grew homesick when her sweetheart was around?"

"Well, as to that," explained Carey, also with a meditative frown, "perhaps Mabel doesn't look on me as a sweetheart any more. You know we aren't actually engaged. It was her suggestion that we should both remain free long enough to be perfectly sure of ourselves—and perhaps she has decided against me." He sank into a moment of reminiscent gloom, remembering Mabel's coldness at parting. "By Jove, Uncle Ben, I don't think Mabel has given me quite the square deal! She ought to have been more frank with me and handed me the truth straight from the shoulder if she's through with me."

The sharp ringing of Mackworth's telephone bell, however, speedily dispelled his momentary gloom.

"I'll answer it," he volunteered. Somehow he could almost have sworn that Peggy Matthews was at the other end of the wire.

But Mackworth already was speaking.

"Hello? What's that? Guess you've got the wrong number. Who is it you want?" With a suspicious exclamation, he shoved the telephone across the table to his nephew. "It's you she's after—whoever she is—at this unearthly hour of the night!"

Carey had changed his mind about trying to find work for the model through his Uncle Ben, and in fact had decided that it was best not even to mention her name. He knew now that Peggy smoked cigarettes and took an occasional cocktail for her nerves—either of which actions would condemn her utterly in the eyes of his strait-laced relative.

"Hello! Philip Carey speaking," he announced in a tone purposely formal, as he took up the telephone.

"Oh, Phil, I'm so glad I found you!"

came the familiar, emotional accents of the model in response. "I know it's late, but I just must talk with you or I shan't be able to sleep a wink. The operator said she was sure you were in your uncle's room, so I hope you won't be put out with me for calling you there."

"Not at all," Carey answered, though not with entire frankness.

"Then will you run right over?"

"Well—I—" Carey hesitated, seeking to phrase his answer so that Mackworth would not catch its meaning.

"O-o-oh!" implored the voice anxiously. "Say you will!"

"All right, then, Peggy, I will." To his consternation, in his haste to end the conversation, he had mentioned the model's name.

"And who is 'Peggy'?" Mackworth inquired, rather sarcastically. "Some friend of Mabel's?"

"No, she's not. She's just a nice little girl here in the hotel—an artist's model. She's perfectly respectable and all that, but—er—unconventional. We've become mighty good friends. But you and the Bethunes aren't the broad-minded kind to understand her, so I've thought best not to say anything at all about her. She wants to see me to-night because she's sort of up against it. I've been kind to her, and the poor kid likes to have some one to whom she can tell her troubles."

"Just a word of warning, Phil," Mackworth called out, as Carey turned and started for the door. "It's all right to be kind and friendly, boy—but don't put too much accent on broad-mindedness. It's dangerous."

Carey paused, looking back over his shoulder.

"Dangerous? How?"

"I mean," said the old man, almost sternly, "that when a young chap meets people of a different and a laxer world, his safety lies not in broad-mindedness, but in becoming narrow to the point



She slid from the couch and stepped out into the middle of the floor for Carey's inspection, turning round and round slowly.

of prudery. I haven't banged around hotels for fifty years without learning something about certain types of the hotel female."

"Great Scott, uncle!" Carey exclaimed in disgust. "Poor little Peggy Matthews is no vampire! She's the

most harmless, good-hearted, hard-working little creature that ever was."

"Wait a minute," demanded Mackworth, detaining the young man again. "I've something to say to you before you go. Not about the girl this time. It's that I'm going to run up to the Adirondacks to-morrow to see if I can't rid myself of this rheumatism, and I want you to go with me. We can at-

tend to the details of that new business proposition up there as well as we can here."

Carey assented cheerfully before he bade his uncle good night. Mackworth was anxious to remove him from the influence of a supposed siren, and there was no harm in letting the old man imagine that he was having his own way about things, entirely.

The transom of Peggy's door was covered with heavy felt, but a rim of bright light around its edge showed the presence of a wakeful and alert occupant within.

"Is that you, Phil?" called a sweet and tremulous voice as Carey knocked.

He held his open watch in his hand and conscientiously displayed the time-piece on entering.

"What do I care if it is nearly midnight?" pouted Peggy on beholding it. "All the professional women in the house are permitted to receive callers in their apartments as late as eleven o'clock, and in my state of mind, Phil, if I can't talk with you, I'll just die!"

"Well, you're not going to die, girlie, and you can talk all you like," Carey assured her with sympathy.

He produced a package of cigarettes from his coat pocket, and Peggy seized upon it without ceremony. A few luxurious puffs of smoke seemed to quiet her, and she leaned back on the pillows of her couch, silent and pensive.

"Now that I'm here—talk," commanded Carey smilingly.

"Not yet," said Peggy, more pensive than before. "I want to be perfectly self-possessed and not the least bit hysterical when I talk to you this time, dear boy, so you'll know I mean exactly what I say."

She was wearing an Oriental negligee which showed the lines of her figure a bit too revealingly, Carey thought, and hung away too loosely from her neck. But of course a girl whose profession denied her the shelter of even

the scantiest garments in the studios could not be expected to know where good taste would draw the line outside of them.

"I think I like you better in that little gray dress you wore at luncheon, Peggy," he hinted, as a twist of the girl's body brought her figure into still bolder relief. "I think I'd like you to wear gray always. I suppose that bright-colored—er—r—shawl, or whatever it is wrapped around you, came from one of those old studios you hate so, eh?"

"Yes, Ali Ben Hammed, the painter, threw it to me one day when I'd finished posing for him, and told me I could have it. Of course I loathe the thing, Phil, but really—I'm not so bad in it artistically, am I?"

She slid from the couch and stepped out into the middle of the floor for Carey's inspection, turning round and round slowly.

What a slim, symmetrical little creature she was! No wonder fate had decreed that she should become a model. Of course, looking at her from the art viewpoint, he told himself, made everything seem quite different. How clean and burnished her red hair looked! He remembered she had told him that one shampoo and two baths a day were included in the physical régime of a life model. Her lips were perhaps a trifle too heavy and red, and her eyebrows a bit scraggly and pale in color, but how fresh and white her long neck gleamed, emerging from the gay folds of her drapery! And the undulations of her young body as she moved were full of sensuous grace. Suddenly he turned away his eyes and strode over to a window. A sudden mad impulse to take Peggy in his arms and hold her close had seized upon him.

"Ready to talk now?" he inquired.

Peggy took a farewell puff from the stub of her cigarette, then extinguished it against the face of a little brass tray.

"Yes," she said, catching her breath in a pathetic sigh, "all ready. What I wanted to tell you was that I'd been around to every studio I know anything about, and there's no work for me anywhere. I was told flatly that artists are using either the blond or brunet type of model now, but that the red-haired one has gone completely out. So I've slid back into the same horrible despair you rescued me from before, and I'm there this time to stay."

"No, you're not," denied Carey positively, deciding that the psychological moment had come to suggest helping Peggy through business college. "There are more ways than one of honorably making a living."

"I'd rather die than make it dishonorably!" the model interrupted passionately.

"Of course you would. That's just the kind of square little girl you are, and you don't need to keep insisting upon it to me! Now, listen. If you could secure the training, how would you like to undertake office work for a change?"

"Impossible!" came the shuddering reply. "I just couldn't work in an office!"

"Why not?"

"Because I made a try at that sort of thing, in a small way, when I first came to New York two years ago. Phil, a girl like me simply can't stay in an office. She isn't safe there. Married men and everything—it's just awful! Nothing but being misunderstood and pursued! No, dear boy, there's only one way out of my troubles for me. I'm going to take that dose of laudanum after we say good-by tonight, and end it all forever."

"No, you won't, Peggy. You're too brave and sensible for that. Why what's a little temporary discouragement? It's only a question of time when you'll get on your feet again."

"You mean," she said, with a bitter

twist of her lips, "it's only a question of time until I starve, don't you? I've been asked to give up my room in the hotel to-morrow on account of the hundred dollars I owe. I've nothing but the streets to look forward to. I may be a coward, but I simply can't face it."

"I didn't know about the hotel bill, Peggy," and Carey's voice was profoundly shocked. "Of course you can't look at things in a sane way with that hanging over your head." He drew forth a wallet and began to count out some money.

"Don't!" cried the model, in shrill protest. "I just wanted a last talk with you because you've been such a friend—that's all! But I can't accept money from you! Oh, I can't! My pride won't let me!"

"There's no such thing as a question of pride between real friends."

"But," she cried chokingly, "I'm not engaged to you—or anything—and you—you're in love with another girl. You've told me you were."

Philip winced slightly. He did not know why, but somehow he wished she had not referred to Mabel.

"Nothing needs to interfere with our friendship, Peggy. You know we agreed on that from the start. There, now, I've dropped a hundred dollars into that little sewing basket of yours," suiting the action to the word, "to tide you over until you find some occupation you're fitted for and like."

Peggy's head went down in her arms. Her body shook as with silent sobs.

"Oh, Phil, you're so dear and good to me! But I just can't let you do for me like that—I can't!"

He laughed masterfully.

"But you will, do you hear me? You must."

Her sobs ceased at that. With her bright hair falling loose about her shoulders, she was an oddly fascinating little figure as she looked up at Carey.

"Aren't you wonderful? I never met

a man before who could make me obey him against my will."

She arose, and her sandal-shod feet carried her softly across the room to a chiffonier before which she knelt. After fumbling in a drawer for a moment, she produced a small vial wrapped in white tissue paper.

"It's what I had intended taking to-night," she said. "I spent my last cent on it to-day on purpose. But I won't do it now. I—I'll wait."

"You wicked little creature!" exclaimed Carey, shocked at this visible proof of her desperate state of mind. "Hand that over to me at once!"

"Oh, no, Phil! Please let me keep it! You'll soon be going away forever—and some day I might need it again."

Ignoring his outstretched hand and retaining the vial, with a little laugh she started to run away from him.

Carey followed her twice around the room before he caught her, and then a struggle for the possession of the vial began. When it ended, they were sitting, breathless, side by side on the couch, and Carey had the vial in his pocket.

"Sh!" Peggy warned him suddenly, whispering. "I hear the night watchman in the hall! It's dreadful my keeping you here so late. It must be two o'clock, at the very least. I'm afraid he sees my light!"

She leaned back and pressed a button in the wall.

Soft darkness enveloped them.

Yet somehow, during Carey's sojourn in the Adirondacks immediately following that evening, it was not Peggy, but Mabel whose unseen image walked beside him through the pure air of the mountain roads. And this despite the fact that his loyalty now belonged to Peggy alone.

As yet he could hardly realize the almost terrific change that had come about in his life and plans. Responsive

to the lure of the model's clinging lips and arms, there in the sudden darkness of her room, and to her wild confession of an elemental, resistless love for him, he, too, had experienced a passion that at the time had shaken him with all the force of a mighty discovery and caused him to make declarations that bound him in unbreakable chains. His former love for Mabel had seemed to dwindle into a pale and puny shadow that could never again take on life and reality, and yet—

There was a letter in his pocket from Mabel now which seemed to bring her very near to him every time he thought of it. It was a sweet, unsuspecting letter, making no mention of the coldness that had existed between them at parting. How could he break the news to her that he had so soon forgotten her for another?

"I thought you were a born huntsman," Mackworth complained, hobbling out of the Big Log Inn to meet Carey returning from a solitary ramble, "but with dog and gun handy, and plenty of game to go after, you haven't made a move. What's bothering you, boy?"

"I'm doing some hard thinking; that's all," and Carey dropped into a piazza chair alongside the one appropriated by Mackworth. "Uncle Ben, I've about decided to ask dad to let me have my headquarters in New York instead of Abingdon. I feel as if I never wanted to see the old town again. Life there is narrow and crippling. Even if dad makes a row about it, I intend to break away from the place and all its former associations."

"H'm!" Mackworth exclaimed, leaning heavily forward on his cane. "So you plan to forsake the town you were born and raised in and break away from former associations, eh?"

"Exactly!" came the brief and emphatic response.

"Which means," stated the old man with biting distinctness, "that you've

got yourself into such a mess in New York you're ashamed to go back to Abingdon or to look Mabel Bethune in the face."

Protested Carey, flushing scarlet: "But I didn't say I'd got myself into a mess—I haven't!"

"That Peggy young woman hasn't been making a fool of you, then?"

"Peggy?" bluffed the young man, nonplused. "Why do you mention her? What the dickens has she to do with what we're talking about?"

"Just this," and Mackworth waved his cane aloft like a danger signal. "I saw you slip a yellowback bill into a letter last night, and I happened to get a good look at the letter before it left the hotel office. What business has Miss Peggy Matthews to be accepting money from you, sir, if she hasn't some hold on you you're not willing to admit?"

"I'm willing to admit everything," Carey burst forth, his tense nerves finding relief in full confession. "Miss Matthews has a hold on me—yes—but it's an honorable one. And it's my own business if I choose to see that she wants for nothing until the day we're married."

"Married?" gasped Mackworth in a consternation that amounted to horror. "Good Lord, boy, you don't mean it has gone as far as that?"

Carey's personal dignity was now so thoroughly offended that it swept everything, even his own recent doubts and perplexities, aside.

"Yes, I do mean it! And coming right down to brass tacks, Uncle Ben," he added gutturally, "you'll have to use a different tone of voice in speaking of Miss Matthews after this! You may have forgotten the fact, but I'll be of age in a couple of weeks, and she and I have agreed to be married the day I'm twenty-one!"

There was a tremor of deep feeling in Mackworth's voice when he spoke

again. Carey had always been his favorite nephew.

"But why such haste, lad, in taking the most important step in a young man's life? At least wait until I've had an opportunity to meet the young woman and tell you how she impresses me."

"But I don't want you to meet her until after she's my wife!" Carey flared back determinedly. "I know the girl loves me, and I know she's honest and on the level. But she's of the artistic, untrammled sort that—pardon my frank speaking—narrow and intolerant people like you and the Bethunes would always consider outside the pale." He arose. Something in his uncle's stricken old face made him feel uncomfortable and uneasy, in spite of himself. "Well, Uncle Ben," he added, with an attempt at nonchalance, "we can't do anything more on that stained-glass proposition until dad has had time to consider it, so if you don't object, I think I'll run back to town on that next train out."

Said the old man grimly:

"Our ways divide. I do not object to anything."

The Ordsley, facing on a street disrupted by subway excavations, and with its pillared entrance shored up by rude timbers against threatened collapse, looked to Carey, when he reached it, as if it had half a mind to topple wearily into the chaos at its feet. But the shabbiness of the hostelry had no power to depress him. He was eager to see Peggy now, having fully convinced himself that, when he took her in his arms again, that first rapturous ardor would return.

Though late, the dining-room door was still open, and as he passed it, he glanced instinctively toward that corner that he and Peggy had favored most. To his surprise, he saw her sitting there in the company of another man, the place otherwise being deserted.

Carey knew the man quite well. His name was Ashton, and he was an ingenuous young chap from the West. But when had Peggy met him? Her back was turned toward the door, but Carey could see the nervous shrugging of her delicate young shoulders as she talked, and could plainly discern the intensely earnest expression of Ashton's countenance as he listened.

Without making his presence known, Carey turned and walked slowly across the lobby toward the café. Ashton was only a harmless kid, who looked like a caricature of one of Edgar Allan Poe's portraits, with his sentimental eyes and curly hair, but what business had Peggy—an engaged girl—to be accepting a stranger's invitation to dinner and lingering in intimate conversation with him afterward? In the quiet café, he dropped into a chair and began to think it over. And presently he began to feel a certain disapproval of his own narrow-mindedness—the very thing he had been condemning in his uncle and the Bethunes! Why, after all, should he object to Peggy's dining with friends—recent or old—while he was away?

He arose, deciding to purchase his fiancée a package of her favorite cigarettes and then to make his presence known to her.

"I beg pardon," said some one from behind him, "but I want to speak to



It was not Peggy, but Mabel whose unseen image walked beside him through the pure air of the mountain roads.

you about something, Carey, if you don't mind."

"Of course I don't mind." Carey smiled with a half-sheepish brightness as he spoke, for the man addressing him was the very one in his thoughts. "What is it, Ashton? I saw you dining with Miss Matthews just now. Does she know I'm back from the country?"

Ashton's thin, dark face took on a look of surprise at the question.

"Wh-why, I can't answer that. She didn't happen to mention you, and I didn't know you'd been out of town

myself. But I was glad to catch sight of you just now," he continued, rather excitedly, "for I've seen you with her, and of course it doesn't take a man long to find out how square and fine and game she is, and all that. I thought I'd rather explain the situation to you than to any of the strangers around here who might only misjudge her."

"What the dickens are you talking about?" asked Carey. "What—situation?"

"Well, the long and the short of it is that the little girl is dead broke, and they're going to put her out of the hotel to-morrow. She's got to have a hundred dollars at once. I'll put up fifty of it, and I want you to let me have the rest until after I get home. I'm leaving town in the morning and have spent about all I had on hand for railroad fares. But you can trust me——"

"Wait!" Carey interrupted gaspingly. "You—you're joking! She—she has all the money she wants—and more. She must have!" He put his hand to his head to make sure he wasn't experiencing some kind of delirium. "You're joking, I say!"

"Joking nothing!" denied the Poelike young Westerner tragically. "If some one doesn't come to her rescue, the girl means to take a dose of laudanum before morning. She went out and bought some this afternoon and showed it to me just now—during dinner."

"Sympathy coin!" a man broke in surprisingly from a table close by, leaning back with a wineglass in his hand. "It's nearly always during dinner that the little Peggy plays for it, and when she does, she always wins out!"

The speaker was Gilbert Weems, the author, red-faced and disheveled and trying to overcome an utterance that had grown a trifle thick. Carey recognized him at once.

"She got fifty dollars out of Harkness, the broker, and a hundred out of Perkins, in the tire business," he con-

tinued, more clearly, "and Ivins, who runs a pawnshop, refused to tell how much he contributed, so it must have been a catastrophe." He smiled facetiously. "I did my little bit, also," he added, setting his glass down, "before a lot of us old stagers happened to get together and compare notes on the Peggy proposition. Then the cat jumped out of the bag. As for you, young man," and he waved his hand cheerfully toward Carey, "I'll wager a ten-dollar bill against a shoestring she's already pulled her little poison bottle on you and worked you for sympathy coin, eh? That's her own special little game, and it's a good one!"

"Is this all true?" Ashton demanded fiercely of the petrified Carey, and, receiving no answer, wavered for a moment, then bolted precipitately through a side door and onto the street.

What became of Ashton after that Peggy's fiancé never knew. He only knew that when at last he stepped into the elevator that would land him near the model's door, he had put in an hour of very hard thinking. Entangled with an adventuress capable of employing even blackmail—that most unworthy of expedients—to hold him, he knew it might take all his wits to free himself from her clutches.

"You? For Heaven's sake!" The girl's big, greenish eyes stared at him in blank astonishment as she came to answer his knock at the door. "Wh-why didn't you send me a telegram you were coming?" she stammered petulantly. "I hate surprises, and I wasn't expecting you for several days."

"And you were expecting—some one else?" asked Carey evenly.

"Of course not, you foolish boy!" Her manner softened instantly, for the expression on Carey's face was unsmiling, set and stern. "I haven't spoken to a soul since you've been away. I've almost died of loneliness without you!" She flung herself against him tumultu-

ously. "Oh, my darling, you'll never realize how blue I've been since you left me!"

But Carey coolly put her from him and stepped back.

"Yes, I do realize—everything—Peggy," he said, his voice quiet and contained, "and that's why I want to return something I once took away from you in case you should need it again," and he thrust into her hand a small vial in its original tissue-paper covering.

There was a sudden lowering of Peggy's pale eyebrows. Her cheeks twitched convulsively.

"What's happened? What do you mean?" she demanded pantingly, flinging the vial on the floor.

"I mean, Peggy, that you played me not only for money, but for my heart and name and honor as well. But on these latter things, thank God, you've lost out! I'm going straight home to the sweetest, truest girl that ever lived—the only one I ever really loved—and beg her on my knees to forgive me and to take me back."

It was a different woman from the one he had known that answered him now—a woman with a face hard, unyouthful, criminal. It was as if she had suddenly removed a mask, and Carey was shocked at the change in her.

"I don't know how all this has come about," she said, her scornful chin held high, her hands on her hips, "but I do know you promised to marry me, and that I intend to hold you to that promise. I have letters I can give a lawyer to prove you're engaged to me. You and your cranky old uncle have money to burn. Don't imagine for an instant I didn't know all about you from the

very first! Men like you can't go back on their word without paying for the privilege and paying well!" She gave a defiant little laugh. "Now just what do you propose to do with me?"

Carey's heart gave a mighty thump. The time for his final move had come.

"What do I propose to do with you, Peggy? Well, what if I propose taking you downstairs and turning you over to George G. Matthews—your husband?"

The model's eyes widened, her mouth went agape.

"So that's it, is it?" she faltered, aghast. "After the old fool swore he'd stay in hiding and let me put over anything I wanted to!" Suddenly she clenched her fists, her voice rising shrill and high. "Where can I find him? Where is he now?"

"I don't know," answered Carey, with an enigmatic smile. "In fact, I've never had the pleasure of laying eyes on the gentleman."

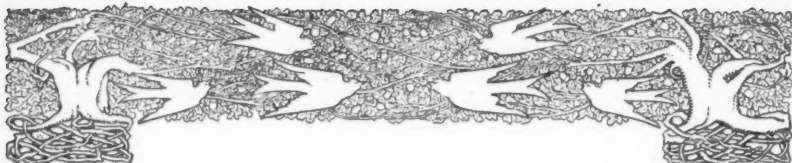
"You've never seen him?" came the frantic question. "Then how did you know I had a husband? Who told you his name?"

"Fate—and Uncle Sam," and Carey produced a letter from his pocket. "The bell boys downstairs have gone on a strike. You phoned the clerk to send up your mail a while ago—and—somebody thought to ask me to deliver it. The letter's postmarked Pittsburgh, and up in the corner is stamped the name of George G. Matthews. I took a chance on his being your husband, and it seems I was right."

His smile was boyish and beaming as he turned on reaching the door.

"Good night, my dear Mrs. Matthews—good night—and good-by!"





What Will You Take Along?

By Katharine Haviland Taylor.

A MAN who collected scarabs is dead.
(God rest his soul!)
Another is gone who young lives led
To learning's goal.
Each, in his way, served in his day,
But for each the days were wrong,
For each forgot friends in ambition's ends,
And—what will they take along?

I know a man who was jolly and fat.
(God rest his soul!)
He wore gray clothes and a soft crush hat;
Big was his heart, and whole!
And every day he paved his way
(And all of his days were short)
By making friends, and that art tends
To turn the grim to sport.

He walks the streets of *somewhere* now,
(I'm sure of this!)
Gripping hands and calling, "I'll vow,
It's Old Man Bliss!"
Making his greetings, his human meetings
Lighten the streets of gold,
Shedding his love in a place above
And there adding light untold.

So—collect your scarabs and ivories, your tapestries and art,
But don't forget that the biggest thing is *the love of the human heart!*
Collect that, too—my advice to you—and life will turn to song.
And I think love and friendships deep, those you can take along.
Um—no hereafter? Oh, perhaps not, but—even so,
The hunger for you in the hearts of friends is a pretty good life, you know!





"Hello," she greeted him breathlessly, and a little doubtfully.

HERRICK had just laid aside coat and hat when there came a tap at his door. He shot a glance at the clock as if the hour might help to identify his caller, then called, "Come in."

In answer, the door opened just wide enough to let a slender figure slip through. When she was in, with a little bubbling laugh, the girl leaned against the door and regarded her host with an expression between defiance and apology.

"Hello," she greeted him breathlessly, and a little doubtfully.

"Why, hello, Miss Frayne?" Behind the cordiality of his tone lurked surprise—and something else.

"I know it's an unconscionable hour," she began in a wonderful voice, "and if you don't want me, I'll go."

"Not want you! I hope my surprise hasn't concealed how flattered I am. Won't you sit down?"

She moved slowly across to the chair

he drew forward, and sat down rather gingerly.

"Sure you were surprised?" she inquired, fixing her big, dark eyes accusingly on his face.

He laughed.

"Sure."

"Thank you," she said seriously.

"It's the first time you've honored me, you know." He spoke this time with a sort of gentle deference. "So my surprise was quite natural."

"I was blue and lonesome to-night," she explained. "When I saw your light, I felt I just couldn't go up to that horrid, dark little room without a word from somebody."

"Why, where's Fanny?"

"Gone."

"Gone! Where? Wasn't it rather sudden?"

She nodded, dashed away a sudden tear, and began to laugh.

"It was really awfully funny. But I did it myself. I fixed it, and now

I'm all alone in this old lonesome town."

She rose with a quick movement, crossed to the window and, pulling back the curtains, looked down into the now quiet street. Herrick's windows opened bayward, and a pale fog was creeping in over the city, dimming and then blotting the twinkling lights, as if one drew a shroud over lips that laughed. The girl stared out with wide eyes.

"Aren't you going to tell me about Fanny?" asked Herrick cheerfully.

She whirled, bringing the curtains together behind her.

"Oh, yes, I'm going to tell you. You see, Fanny was sort of torn between love and duty and a Career with a capital C. Fanny was a nice girl, Mr. Herrick, and careering wasn't all she'd imagined it. But it had a hold on her, and she was too proud to 'fess up to her good old Richard, who was waiting for her to get tired of it and come home."

"Alas, poor Richard!" Herrick smiled.

"He was here yesterday making a last appeal, and he let her know it would be the last one, too. But she thought he'd come back, and, besides, she fancied she was going to get a dandy part at the Majestic, so she sent him away. Last night she found there was no part for her, and she began to see that Dick meant it, and—she was all in." She paused, smiling in a sort of rueful reminiscence. "Well, she decided that this game isn't worth all the red candles she was burning up in it, and what she really wanted was just to go home with Dick. She wanted to catch him in Sacramento, so they could be married and go on home together."

"That was an easier way out than some find," said Herrick.

"Well, it wasn't as easy as it looks, because we were both broke——"

"Why, I thought——" He paused.

"I suppose you thought I was a bloated bondholder on account of my clothes." She gave her velvet gown a scornful little flirt. "Well, I'm not. My clothes are my stock in trade. Why, I hadn't been here a week before I got wise to the fact that if you want to be a stage success, you can do without brains or beauty, but you must have *clothes* and lots of 'em. So I took the money I expected to live on a year and blew it in on gowns and tailor-mades and fetching hats. It paid, all right. It isn't the girl that looks as if she needed it the most that gets a part. It's the one in the smartest clothes that looks the gayest. Do you see?"

"I see." He nodded gravely.

"That was the way Fanny and I worked it. We were always Solomon in all his glory even if we had dinner at Guillet's for thirty cents." She laughed. "Not that we minded that so much. But that's not what I was telling you. About Fanny——" She broke off, a little flush creeping up in her cheeks. "I don't believe I'll tell you, after all."

"Oh, yes, do. I want to know," urged Herrick heartily.

She met his eyes squarely, hers bright with the old mingling of shame and defiance.

"Oh, well, it doesn't make any difference, anyway." A little hard note crept into her mellow tones. "I wanted Fan to go. I knew it was her chance to get out of it all. So I went to raise the money. We'd nothing left to pawn. I—I was sorry you were out of town."

"I'm more than sorry."

"The first person I met was Vawter. You know Tad Vawter, with all his money? He always reminds me of those big, ugly bugs that fly around the arc lights. Of course he stopped and took my hand and ogled me with his horrid pop eyes. It was getting late, and I knew, if Fan didn't catch the five-thirty, she'd miss Dick. And

the first thing I knew I was being civil to Vawter, and he asked me if I didn't want to wear his big diamond ring, and I said yes and took the hateful thing. He almost killed himself then trying to be sweet. As soon as I could shake him, I ran to the nearest place and pawned it! Wasn't it the funniest thing?" She began to laugh, and a big tear rolled unheeded down her cheek.

"Wouldn't you rather owe it to me?" asked Herrick gently. "I'll get it for you to-morrow, if you like."

"Oh, would you? You don't know how I—— It's awfully good of you."

"And—would you like me to give it to him?"

"Yes, if you—if you don't mind." She suddenly turned her back on him and began to look at a photograph on his mantel. After a moment she spoke in suspiciously level tones. "This is Miles Fenner, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's Miles. He's going to marry my sister, you know."

"No, I didn't know, of course." She turned and came back. "Is he good enough for her?"

"Of course he's not. No man is good enough for a fellow's only sister. But Miles is a decent sort. He'll be good to Polly, and they're very much in love."

"Polly?"

"I call her that. Florence it is. How did you know?"

"Somebody told me. Did you know that my name isn't Frayne?"

"Now how should I know?" he asked lightly. "Frayne for stage euphony, I suppose?"

She nodded.

"My name's Smith—really it is. I didn't think it would look well on the billboards when I get to be a star—just Doris Smith."

"It's really Doris, then?"

"Oh, yes, that's real. So's the color

of my hair—yet." She ran a finger through its luxuriant chestnut.

Again that little silence fell between them; then Herrick:

"By the way, Florence sent me her last picture to-day. I'll show it to you."

Doris Smith took it and studied the pictured face a long time. And while he waited for her comment, Herrick compared the one in the photograph with the one that observed it. There was not much likeness between Florence's prim hair and the picturesque fluffiness of Doris'. The eyes in the picture were wide, simple, childlike, unsuspecting; the eyes that looked were deep, wise, a little mocking, yet, too, in their slight defiance one might read, "Why should I show my soul to you, that proud, lonely little soul, which all the cruelties of the world shall never compel to reveal its hot and secret tears." And on the fresh lips—Doris looked up and caught him at it—knew instantly what he was doing.

"Comparisons are odious," she reminded him with a twisted smile.

"Your antennæ," he declared, "are really painfully developed. Now——"

"You needn't deny it. I know what you were thinking. She's very sweet and lovely and—not a bit like me."

"Why should you be like her?" he argued lightly. "Or look like her? Polly is sweet, but you know that you are ever so much—lovelier."

"Don't," she said.

"I beg your pardon," he cried contritely. "I didn't mean to——"

"Oh, it's all right," she granted listlessly. "But I often think how different men are about their own sisters—and other people's."

"I'm afraid they are," he admitted.

"Now if Florence, your sister, were sitting like this in some man's rooms, you wouldn't like it, would you?"

"No. I shouldn't like it."

"And what do you think of me, I wonder."

"Ah, but you are different—you—" he began tenderly.

"There! That makes it a lot better, doesn't it?" she burst out, angry tears in her eyes. She sprang up as he made a whimsical gesture of despair. "Oh, I know it's not your fault that I'm here! I came of my own accord. What I want to know is *why*? Why am I here, while she, your sister, is there, protected, ignorant? Do you know why I was so anxious to get Fan off? Because she was going to the devil about as fast as she could. Oh, she's a good girl yet, but she was slipping. She couldn't resist this atmosphere—all this scheming ambition, this intrigue, this tawdry bohemianism that we breathe every minute!"

"But she sought it," said Herrick slowly.

"Yes." Her rich voice sank. "And so did I." She moved to the table again, and, picking up Florence's picture, looked at it curiously; then dropped it face down. "No, I didn't. That isn't true. I didn't seek this—I never even dreamed of it. People think that girls like me come here because this sort of life calls to some kindred quality in us. It isn't true. Why, I lived in a little town up in Oregon. My father had a ranch there. My mother's been dead a long time, and I was educated in another quiet little town. I came home to nothing. There was nothing to do, nothing to see, nothing to look forward to. And I was full of life—eager to live. I'd get on my horse and ride miles and miles, dreaming of the great world that I was as ignorant of as a baby. Then I got stage-struck. My father died—we'd never been much to each other—and instead of leaving me independent, I

found I'd have a few hundred dollars after his debts were paid.

"Of course, I came straight to San Francisco. Can't you see me doing it? Oh, I was clever enough. I learned quickly. I had a little talent, and I was young and fresh—"

She turned away with a choked little laugh. Herrick sat silent.

"You say we sought it," she went on after a moment. "But we only sought it because we thought it meant greatness and happiness. Why don't we leave it, then, you think. Because we're like flies in a web or moths in a candle—we blundered in and we can't get out. Sometimes—I get afraid. That's why I came in here to-night. Fan's gone—" She suddenly swept her gloves from the table and started for the door. "I must go. I've kept you up quite long enough. Thanks for your hospitality, and you're quite welcome to all this last reckless gaiety."

"Wait a minute," said Herrick. "It's awfully good of you to tell me about yourself, and I want to tell you this about me. I'm going to Honolulu tomorrow night on business. It will mean a good deal to me. I don't know when I'll be back—" He hesitated.

"I wish you the best of luck," she said.

"Doris, will you marry me tomorrow and go with me?"

She looked him squarely in the eyes, no tears, no blushes, no evasions.

"Why are you saying that?" she asked in a low voice.

"Because I want you—because I love you. Will you go?"

"Yes."

After all, it isn't fireflies who blunder into candles. They have a light of their own.



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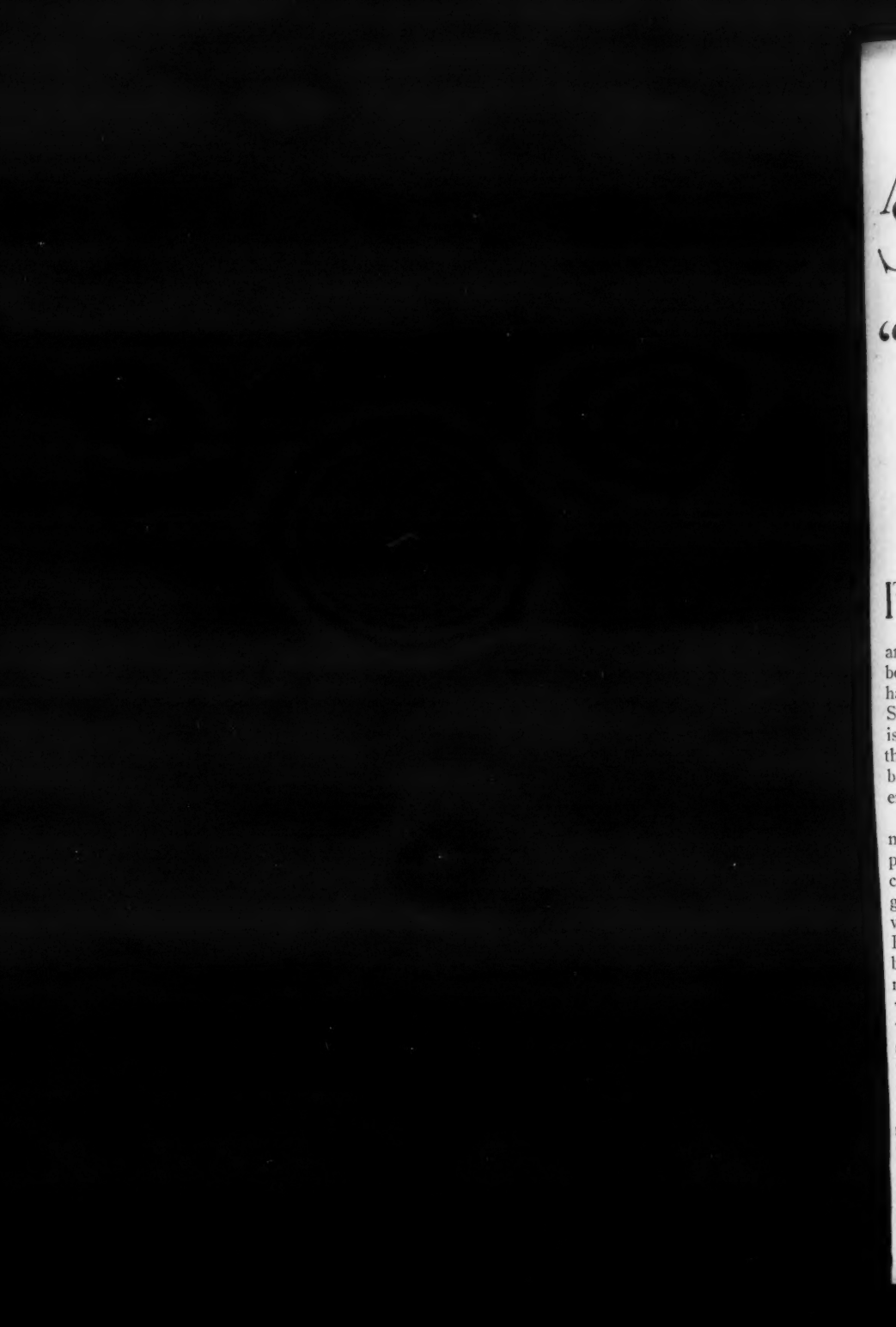
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NEW YORK STAGES SUCCESSSES

"Dear Brutus"

A Comedy

By Sir J. M. Barrie

Author of "The Little Minister," "Peter Pan," "A Kiss for Cinderella," etc.



Sir J. M. Barrie

IT is all a very modern, Barriesque version of "Midsummer Night's Dream"—a play of such charm and fancy and laughter and wistful beauty as no other living writer could have given us. Taking his theme from Shakespeare—"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings"—"Dear Brutus" becomes none other than "Dear Audience."

The first act shows a varied assortment of mortals gathered at a house party in the home of Mr. Lob, an eccentric creature whom none of his guests is able to comprehend in the very least, and who is really an elderly Puck—"that lob of spirits"—becoming bored with the monotony of life. Barrie describes him as "rather unearthly, very small, and exceedingly old, but very light and vivacious. Perhaps a sprite who has lost his way among mortals." He is the *deus ex machina* of the play.

Every year, in the week of Midsummer Eve, Lob gives a party at this country home of his, not too far from Lon-

don, where he lives with his flowers and trees. This year he has as his guests a certain Mr. Purdie, a lawyer, who is also something of a philanderer, married to "a woman who does not understand his real soul hunger." His wife, Mabel Purdie, is present, as well as Joanna Trout, the lovely young thing Mr. Purdie thought he should have married. The Coades are middle-aged, contented, commonplace folks—just an average pair. Then there are the Dearthths. He is an artist who is a failure, driven to drink by the discontent and scorn of his wife. Mrs. Dearthth is a childless woman with a sharp tongue. Another guest is the very snobbish, exquisite lady of fashion, Lady Caroline Lancy. She is particularly disliked by Matey, Lob's butler and guardian. Matey has a habit of pilfering the guests' jewels.

Only slightly acquainted with one another, and puzzled at finding themselves assembled in such strange company, in so wild and eerie a country place, the guests discuss their host, questioning Matey as to his master's reasons for in-

By Courtesy of the Charles Frohman Company, Inc.



Joanna Trout Moley
(Elizabeth Robson) (Leda Chivers)

Mrs. Deearth
(Violet Spence)

Mabel Purdie
(Marianne Talbot)

Mr. Deearth
(William Gifford)

Mrs. Coade
(Mrs. W. Coade)

Mr. Purdie
(John Purdie)

Lady Caroline Lennox
(Lady Caroline Lennox)

Edith
(Edith Lennox)

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Helen Hayes, the "might-have-been" daughter, and Mr. Gillette, the artist, in "Dear Brutus."

viting them. Mrs. Coade asks Matey the origin of the name Lob.

MRS. COADE (*triumphant*): That's what was in my head! Lob was another name for Puck.

JOANNA: Well, he's certainly rather like what Puck might have grown into if he had forgotten to die. And, by the way, I remember now he does call

his flowers by the old Elizabethan names.

MATEY: He always calls the nightingale Philomel, miss, if that is any help.

MRS. DEARTH: None whatever! Tell me this. Did Lob specially ask you all for Midsummer week?

LADIES: Yes, yes.

MATEY: He would!

MRS. COADE: Now what do you mean?

MATEY: He always likes them to be here on Midsummer Night, ma'am.

MRS. DEARTH: Them? Whom?

MATEY: Them who have *that* in common.

MRS. PURDIE: What *can* it be?

MATEY (*dissembling*): I don't know.

LADY CAROLINE: I hope we are all nice women. We don't know each other very well. Does anything startling happen at those times?

MATEY (*doggedly*): I don't know.

JOANNA: Why, I believe *this* is Midsummer Eve!

MATEY: Yes, miss, it is. The villagers all know it. They are all inside their houses to-night—with the doors barred.

LADY CAROLINE: Because of—of *him*?

MATEY: He frightens them. There are stories. (*Enter LOB.*)

LOB: Stories—all nonsense, of course—just foolish talk of the villagers. (*Like one pitying their credulity*) They say that on Midsummer Eve there is a strange wood in this part of the country.

MRS. DEARTH: Where?

PURDIE: Ah, that is one of its most charming features, I am told. It is never twice in the same place, apparently. It has been seen on different parts of the Downs and on More Common. Once it was close to Radley Village and another time about a mile from the sea! Oh, a sporting wood!

LOB: A wood I have set my heart on our going in search of to-night. It's the thing I've wanted, and it isn't good for me not to get the thing I want.

A little later Lob is alone, petting and talking to his flowers arranged in profusion about the room, when John Purdie and Joanna Trout enter. Although Purdie's wife is in the house, his arm is around Joanna's waist.

JOANNA: What were you saying to them, Lob?

LOB: I was just saying, "Two's company, three's none." (*Goes out.*)

JOANNA: That man—he suspects!

PURDIE: Who minds him?

JOANNA: And Mabel? She saw you kiss my hand. Oh, Jack, if Mabel suspects!

PURDIE (*taking her hand*): There's nothing for her to suspect.

JOANNA: No, there isn't, is there? (*Nestling in his arms*) Jack, I'm not doing anything wrong, am I?

PURDIE (*passionately*): You!

JOANNA (*nestling closer*): Mabel is your wife, Jack. I should hate myself if I did anything that was disloyal to her.

PURDIE: Those eyes could never be disloyal, my lady of the svelt blue eyes! Oh, the sveltness of you! Why are you so svelt?

JOANNA: Ah, Jack! All I want is to—to help her and you.

PURDIE: I know—how well I know, my own brave love!

JOANNA: I'm very fond of Mabel, Jack. I should like to be the best friend she has in the world.

PURDIE (*caressing her*): You are, dearest! No woman ever had a better friend.

JOANNA: And yet I don't think she really likes me. (*Puts her arms around his neck and draws him closer.*) I wonder why. I think perhaps Mabel doesn't appreciate your finer qualities.

PURDIE (*complacently*): I often think, Joanna, that I am rather like a flower that has never had the sun to shine on it nor the rain to water it.

JOANNA (*shuddering*): You almost break my heart.

PURDIE (*rubbing his hands cheerfully*): I suppose there is no more lonely man than I walking the earth today.

Of course, Joanna is his star. She has made a better man of him. She



DEARTH (*William Gillette*): Perhaps if we had had children! Pity!

MRS. DEARTH (*Hilda Spong*): A blessing, I should think, seeing what sort of a father they would have had.

has made him kinder to Mabel, made him think of many little ways of giving her pleasure. There was the day he first met Joanna and went home and read to Mabel for an hour. Then, after the first time he embraced her, he gave Mabel a ruby bracelet.

PURDIE: Those new earrings of hers

—they are in memory of the first day you called me Jack. Her Paquin gown—the one with the beads—was because you let me kiss you.

JOANNA (*pressing her cheek to his*): I didn't exactly let you.

PURDIE: No, but you have such a dear way of giving in.

JOANNA (*suddenly*): Jack, she hasn't worn that gown of late.

PURDIE: Nor the jewels, either. I think she has some sort of idea now that when I give her anything nice, it means that you have been nice to me. She has rather a suspicious nature, Mabel; she never used to have it, but it seems to be growing on her. I wonder why; I wonder why, Joanna? (*He kisses her passionately as Mrs. Purdie looks in through the window behind them.*)

JOANNA (*starting up*): Who was that?

PURDIE (*going to the window*): There's no one.

JOANNA: Yes, there was. If it was

Mabel! Oh, Jack, (*holding out her arms to him*) if she saw us, she would think you were kissing me! (*Purdie hurries into her embrace and kisses her again just as Mrs. Purdie comes in through the door.*)

MRS. PURDIE (*smiling*): I am so sorry to interrupt you, Jack, but please wait a moment before you kiss her again. Excuse me, Joanna. (*Crosses to the window and carefully draws the curtains.*) I didn't want the others to see. They mightn't understand how noble you are, Jack. You can go on now. (*Exits, still smiling.*)

Purdie and Joanna stand as if thunderstruck.

JOANNA (*starting forward*): Oh, how contemptible! Mabel!

MRS. PURDIE (*returning*): Did you call me, Joanna?

JOANNA: I insist on an explanation. (*Rather haughty.*) What were you doing out there, Mabel?

MRS. PURDIE (*softly*): I was looking for something I have lost.

PURDIE: Anything important?

MRS. PURDIE: I used to fancy it, Jack. It is my husband's love. You don't happen to have picked it up, Joanna? If you don't value it very much, I should like it back—the pieces, I mean.

JOANNA (*indignantly*): Mabel, I—I will not be talked to in that way. To imply that I—that your husband—Oh, shame!

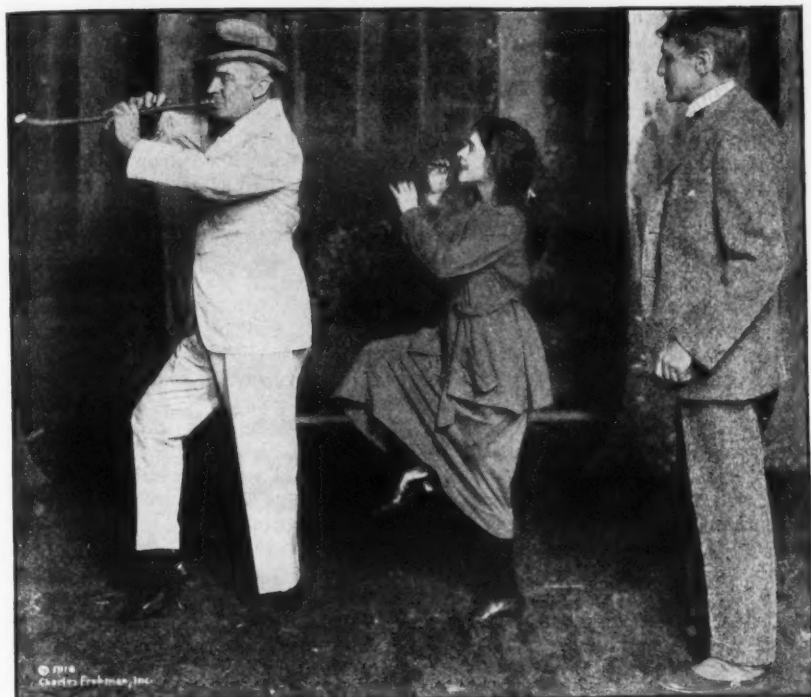
PURDIE (*looking rather foolish*): I must say, Mabel, that I am a little disappointed in you. I certainly understood that you had gone upstairs to put on your boots.

MRS. PURDIE (*sarcastical*):



Matey and his "Caroliny."

In the magic forest the pilfering butler has become the powerful profiteer, Sir James Matey.



Mr. Coade, Margaret and Dearth, in the forest scene.

ly): Poor old Jack! (To JOANNA)
As for you—you fox—

JOANNA (*magnanimously*): I forgive you, Mabel. You will be sorry for this afterward.

PURDIE: Not a word against Joanna, Mabel! If you knew how nobly she has spoken of you!

JOANNA: She does know. She has been listening.

MRS. PURDIE: Fox!

JOANNA: Sneak!

PURDIE (*stepping between them*): This is a man's business. I must be open with you now, Mabel. It is the manlier way. If you wish it, I shall always be true to you in word and deed. It is your right. But I cannot pretend that Joanna is not the one woman in the

world for me. If I had met her before you— It's Kismet, I suppose.

JOANNA: Too late! Too late!

MRS. PURDIE: I suppose you never knew what true love was till you met her, Jack?

PURDIE: You force me to say it. Joanna and I are as one person. We have not a thought at variance. We are one rather than two.

MRS. PURDIE (*looking at JOANNA*): Yes, and that's the one! I am so sorry to have marred your lives.

PURDIE (*thinking himself rather fine*): If any blame there is, it is all mine. She is as svelt as—the driven snow. The minute I mentioned love to her, she told me to desist.

MRS. PURDIE: Not she!

JOANNA: That shows how you were sneaking again. Mabel, don't you see how splendid he is?

MRS. PURDIE (*scornfully*): Not quite, Joanna.

Then we have a glimpse of the marital tragedy of the Dearths—the artist who married his model and, because of her scorn and discontent, took to drink. She is continually taunting him with the fact that she might easily have become the magnificent Lady Finch-Fallowes instead of the wife of a poor, unsuccessful artist like him.

DEARTH: I suppose that was where you made the mistake. It's hard on you, old lady! I suppose it's too late to try to patch things up, Alice?

MRS. DEARTH: Let's be honest. It's too late, Will.

DEARTH: Perhaps if we had had children! Pity!

MRS. DEARTH: A blessing, I should think, seeing what sort of a father they would have had!

DEARTH: I dare say you're right. Well, Alice, I know that somehow it's my fault. I'm sorry for you.

MRS. DEARTH: I'm sorry for myself. If I hadn't married you, what a different woman I should be! What a fool I was!

DEARTH: Ah! Three things, they say, come not back to men or women—the spoken word, the past life, and the neglected opportunity. Wonder if we should make any more of them, Alice, if they did come back to us!

At midnight, Lob, having stirred the curiosity of his guests, throws open his doors upon a magic sight—an enchanted forest that has sprung up about the house. It is the realm of the might-have-been. And one after another, unable to resist, the guests, with the exception of the contented Mrs. Coade, wander into this World of the Second Chance.

The curtain rises on the second act

with the self-satisfied Mr. Coade gayly skipping about the wood, bachelor free, piping his tunes of Pan. Matey, the piffering butler, appears, now a prosperous, rather shady promoter, and married to the haughty Lady Caroline Lancy, whom he so detested in Act I. She adores him as her master and worships him for his wealth and power. Mayhap he has reached his present heights by stealing rings from week-end guests, but, at any rate, he and his "Caroline" are very happy. Mrs. Dearth finds herself indeed the Honorable Mrs. Finch-Fallowes, but cast off, hungry, embittered, begging for a crust of bread.

The philandering Mr. Purdie is married to Joanna, the "woman who understood," and who jealously follows him about as he flirts with Mabel, now the "other woman."

PURDIE: I don't know, Mabel, whether you have noticed that I am not like other men?

MABEL: Yes!

PURDIE: All my life I have been a soul that has had to walk alone.

MABEL: How tragic!

PURDIE: I do so still. Then I met Joanna. Foolishly, as I now see, I thought she would understand that I was far too deep a nature really to mean the little things I sometimes said to her.

MABEL: And so you married her?

PURDIE: And so I married her. (*Sob from JOANNA, who is listening.*) But still my soul walked alone.

MABEL: Then you met me?

PURDIE: Then I met you.

MABEL: Too late—never—forever—forever—never! They are the saddest words in the English tongue.

PURDIE: At the time, I thought a still sadder word was "Joanna."

MABEL: What was it you saw in me that made you love me?

PURDIE (*his arms around her*): I



MARGARET: How awful it would be, daddy, to wake up and find one wasn't alive! Just a might-have-been! Dad! I think men need daughters.

DEARTH: They do. Fame is rot. Daughters are the thing.

think it was the feeling that you were so like myself.

There follows the most charming scene in the play. Dearth, the childless artist, enters with canvas and easel and paints. Dancing gayly about him is a young girl—the daughter he might have had.

DEARTH: You know, I oughtn't to have brought you out so late. You

should be tucked up in your cozy bed at home.

MARGARET: And the sheet over my face?

DEARTH: Where it oughtn't be.

MARGARET: And daddy tiptoeing in to take it off.

DEARTH: Which is more than you deserve.

MARGARET: And then saying to him—



MARGARET: You'll never know which I am till you look at my hair.

self: "Yes, yes, she's sound!" and tip-toeing to the door again.

DEARTH: Thankful to be done with her for the evening.

MARGARET: Then why does he stand so long at the door? And before he's gone, she bursts out laughing, for she has been awake all the time.

DEARTH: That's about it. What a life!

MARGARET (*sitting*): Daddy, what is a "might-have-been?"

DEARTH: A might-have-been? They're ghosts, Margaret! I dare say I "might-have-been" a great swell of a

painter, instead of just this uncommonly happy nobody—or, again, I might have been a worthless, idle waster of a fellow.

MARGARET (*incredulous*): You!

DEARTH: Who knows? Some little kink in me might have set me off on the wrong road. And that poor soul I might so easily have been might have had no Margaret. I'm sorry for *him*.

MARGARET: Oh, so am I! The poor old daddy, wandering about the world without me!

DEARTH: And there are other I "might have been" a great swell of a

intangible. Shades, Margaret, made of sad folks' thoughts.

MARGARET (*gayly*): I'm so glad I'm not a shade. How awful it would be, daddy, to wake up and find one wasn't alive! Dad! I think men need daughters.

DEARTH: They do.

MARGARET: Especially artists.

DEARTH: Especially artists.

MARGARET: Fame is not everything.

DEARTH: Fame is rot! Daughters are the thing.

MARGARET: Daughters are the thing.

DEARTH: Daughters are the thing.

I wonder if sons would be even nicer?

DEARTH: Not a patch on daughters. The awful thing about a son is that never, never—at least, from the day he goes to school—can you tell him that you rather like him. By the time he's ten, you can't even take him on your knee. Sons are not worth having, Margaret. Signed, W. Dearth.

MARGARET: But if you were a mother, dad, I dare say he would let you do it. And then, when he was gigantically big, it would be rather lovely to have him do it to you. Sons are not so bad. Signed, M. Dearth. But I'm glad you prefer daughters. At what age are we nicest, daddy?

DEARTH (*jocular and tender at the same time*): That's a poser. I think you were nicest when you were two, and knew your alphabet up to G, but fell over at H. No, you were best when you were half past three—or just before you struck six—or in the mumps year, when I asked you in the early morning how you were and you said solemnly, "I haven't tried yet." I'm not sure that chicken pox doesn't beat mumps. Oh, Lord! I'm all wrong. The nicest time in a father's life is *now*, the year before she puts up her hair.

MARGARET: I suppose that is a splendid time for fathers. But there's a nicer

time coming to you, daddy—the year she *does* put up her hair.

DEARTH: Suddenly puts it up forever? You know, I'm afraid that when the day for that comes, I won't be able to stand it. It will be too exciting. My poor heart, Margaret!

MARGARET: No, no, it will be *lucky* you, for it isn't to be a bit like that. I'm to be a girl and woman day about, for the first year. You'll never know which I am till you look at my hair. And even then you won't know, for if it's down, I'll put it up, and if it's up, I'll put it down. (*Importantly*) And so my daddy will gradually get used to the idea. (*Gravely*) Daddy, now you are thinking about—about my being in love some day. (*He nods.*) I won't, you know, no, never! Oh, I've quite decided, so don't be afraid. (*Whispers.*) Will you hate him at first, daddy?

DEARTH: Whom?

MARGARET: Well, if there was!

DEARTH: If there was what, darling?

MARGARET: You know the kind of thing I mean, quite well. Would you hate him at first?

DEARTH: I hope not. I should want to strangle him, but I wouldn't hate him.

MARGARET: I would. That is to say, if I liked him.

DEARTH: If you liked him, how could you hate him?

MARGARET: For daring.

DEARTH: Daring what?

MARGARET: You know! (*Sighing half humorously*) But of course I shall have no say in the matter.

DEARTH: Why?

MARGARET (*reproachfully*): You will do it all. You do everything for me.

DEARTH (*with a groan*): I can't help it.

MARGARET: You will even write my love letters, if I ever have any to write—which I won't.

DEARTH (*properly alarmed*): Surely



DEARTH: Alice—I didn't know you when I was in the woods with Margaret! She—she— (He realizes his greatest loss.) Margaret! Oh, my God!



Mr. Gillette and the women in the cast.

Left to right: Elizabeth Risdon, Myrtle Tannehill, Hilda Spong, Helen Hayes, Violet Kemble Cooper, and Marie Wainwright.

to goodness I'll leave you alone to do that!

MARGARET: Not you. You'll try to, but you won't be able. You think I'm pretty, don't you, dad, whatever other people say?

DEARTH: Well enough.

MARGARET: I *know* I have nice ears.

DEARTH: They are all right now, but I had to work on them for months.

MARGARET: You don't mean to say that you did my ears?

DEARTH: Rather!

MARGARET (*entreating*): My dimple's my own, isn't it?

DEARTH: I'm glad you think so. I wore out the point of my little finger over that dimple.

MARGARET: Even my dimple? Have I anything that's really mine? A bit of my nose or anything?

DEARTH: When you were a babe, you had a laugh that was all your own.

MARGARET: Haven't I it now?

DEARTH: It's gone. I'll tell you how it went. We were fishing in a stream—that is to say, I was wading, and you were sitting on my shoulders doing the fishing. We didn't catch anything. Somehow or another—I can't think how I did it—you irritated me, and I answered you sharply. (*He shudders.*)

MARGARET: I can't believe that.

DEARTH: Yes, I did. I gave you a shock, and for the moment the world no longer seemed a safe place for you. Your faith in me had always made it safe till then. You were suddenly not even sure of your bread and butter, and I was in a nice state, I can tell you.

MARGARET: But what has that to do with my laugh, daddy?

DEARTH: The laugh that children are

born with lasts so long as they have perfect faith. To think that it was I who robbed you of yours! I expect I am not the only parent in that plight, though they may not remember the doing of it.

MARGARET: I'm sure the laugh just went off with the tear to comfort it, and they have been playing about that stream ever since. They have quite forgotten us, so why should we remember them? Cheeky little beasts! Shall I tell you my farthest-back recollection? (*He nods.*) I remember the first time I saw the stars. I had never seen night, and then I saw *it*, and the *stars*, together. Crack in my eye, Tommy! Not every one can boast of such a lovely recollection for their earliest.

DEARTH: I was determined your earliest should be a good one.

MARGARET: Do you mean to say you planned it?

DEARTH: Rather! Most people's earliest recollection is of some trivial thing—how they cut their finger or lost a piece of string. I was resolved my Margaret's should be something bigger. I was poor, but I could give her the stars. Hullo! (*He sees something strange. Part of a house has imperceptibly appeared in the background.*) I hadn't noticed there was a house there.

MARGARET (*agitated*): Nor I! Daddy, I feel sure there wasn't a house there. Let's get out of the wood. (*Almost hysterical.*) Don't go into that house, daddy! I'm afraid of it. I don't know why, but I'm afraid of that house.

DEARTH: There's a kiss for each moment till I come back.

MARGARET: Daddy, don't go!

DEARTH: Margaret! (*He indicates to her to stand at a tree like a naughty child; then he makes a face at her to compel her to smile. They smile to each other, the smile of understanding they have exchanged a thousand times.*

Neither of them knows that this is the last time. He goes off gayly.)

MARGARET: Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! (*She runs about wood in growing fear.*) Come back, come back, daddy! I don't want to be a might-have-been. (*The lights are now dim. The house has disappeared. All is growing dark.*)

In the final act, the guests wander from the wood back into Lob's house again. First comes Purdie, still making love to Mabel. Joanna follows them. She watches her husband as he sinks to his knees before Mabel, pledging eternal faithfulness.

PURDIE: Mabel, if the doglike devotion of a lifetime— (*Suddenly the spell of the wood begins to lift from his brain. He looks around in a daze. Surely he has been in this very room before. Or hasn't he? Desperately he clings to the spell and emotions of the enchanted wood.*) Don't let go! Hold on to what we were doing, or we'll lose grip of ourselves. (*Bewildered*) Devotion. Something about devotion. Hold on to devotion. "If the doglike devotion of a lifetime—" Which of you was I saying that to?

MABEL: To me.

PURDIE: Are you sure?

MABEL: I'm not quite sure.

PURDIE: Joanna! What do you think? Good heavens! (*Sudden increase of uneasiness.*) Which of you is my wife?

JOANNA: I am. (*Starting as she comes to reality again*) No, I'm not.

PURDIE: What?

JOANNA: It's Mabel who is your wife.

MABEL: Me? (*They slowly take it in.*)

PURDIE: Why, of course you are, Mabel.

MABEL: What? I believe I am!

PURDIE: But how can it be? I was running away with you!

JOANNA: You needn't do it now.

PURDIE (*almost with a grievance*): Why have I been making all this fuss? S-sh! The wood—— Hold on to the wood. It's the wood that explains it. Yes, I see the whole thing. (*He gazes at LOB.*) You infernal old rascal! (*Shakes fist at LOB.*) Let's try to think it out. Don't any one speak for a moment. Think first! Love—— Hold on to love! (*Pause.*) I say, I believe I'm not a deeply passionate chap at all. I believe I'm just—a philanderer!

MABEL (*nearly crying*): It's what you are! You made love to me in the wood because you thought I wasn't your wife!

PURDIE: That's of no importance. Just a philanderer! And if people don't change, I suppose we'll begin all over again now.

JOANNA: I dare say, but not with each other! I may philander again—but not with you! (*They look at each other, and give way to shame.*)

PURDIE: The wood has taught me one thing, at any rate—that it isn't accident that shapes our lives.

JOANNA: It's fate.

PURDIE: It's not fate, either. Fate is something outside us. What really plays the dickens with us is *something in ourselves*—something that would make us go on doing the same sort of fool thing, however many chances we get.

JOANNA: How ignominious! But I believe you're right.

It is the sight of a tray of tea things that brings Matey back to himself when he returns. With a happy smile, he comes back to his tips and his profiteering in the "snatching up of unconsidered trifles." Lady Caroline, needless to say, is rejoiced to find herself relieved of her vulgarian spouse, and even to sink back again into her old, discontented self. That Purdie is still the philanderer is evidenced by his sigh for a new affinity with Lady Caroline.

But there is one tragic figure to return from the enchanted forest. This is Dearth, who staggers in with the memory of his lovely Margaret fresh in his mind. Dazedly he realizes that



Dearth and his wife, touched to a finer mood by their experience, plan to begin life anew.

he has no daughter. When Mrs. Dearth enters, his brain clears of the wood's mystery. He realizes the truth. It was all of Lob's doing.

MRS. DEARTH: Lob! He did it! What did he do?

DEARTH: I'm—it's coming back! I'm not the man I thought myself. I'm a waster!

MRS. DEARTH (*her brain clearing*): I'm not Mrs. Finch-Fallowes! Who am I? (*The husband and wife stare at each other—and realize.*)

DEARTH: You were that lady in the wood!

MRS. DEARTH: It's you—my husband, that man with the little daughter!

DEARTH: Alice! (*There is a very little movement, but they are overcome.*)

MRS. COADE (*who has stayed at the house, and is fully in her right mind*): My dear, you are much better off, so far as I can see, than if you were Mrs. Finch-Fallowes.

MRS. DEARTH (*generously*): Yes. (*With passionate knowledge*) Yes, indeed! But he isn't!

DEARTH (*taking a step toward Mrs. DEARTH*): Alice—I— (*He tries to smile.*) I didn't know you when I was in the woods with Margaret! She—

she— (*He realizes his greatest loss.*) Margaret! Oh, my God! (*Buries his face in his hands.* MRS. DEARTH goes to him.)

MRS. DEARTH: I should have liked to have been her mother, Will. (*He does not look up. She turns and goes out of the room with rather a brave swagger.*)

DEARTH: Lob!

PURDIE (*to Lob*): You old ruffian!

DEARTH (*rising*): No, I'm rather fond of him. Our lonely, friendly little host. (*Crosses to Lob.*) Lob, I thank thee for that hour. (*Goes to door, pauses, and calls brokenly.*) Alice!

PURDIE: There's nothing the matter with Mrs. Dearth except that she would always choose the wrong man. Good man or bad—but the wrong man for her. That fellow Shakespeare! He was the fellow! Don't you remember the lines: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings?"

JOANNA: Meaning by "dear Brutus" "dear Audience," I suppose.

PURDIE: I think we had all better toddle off to bed. Hold on to bed!

And the curtain falls upon a stage deserted except for the presence of Lob, who yawns before the fire.

"Lob," says Barrie, "is really very tired of it all."



THE REASON

SHE loved the gold and crimson,
 I loved the gray.
 She loved the sunrise,
 I departing day.
 She loved the dancing lights
 In many eyes;
 I loved her eyes alone—
 And hence my sighs.

BARBARA HOLLIS.

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MULTIPLE LOVE

By FRANCIS ROLT-WHEELER
DRAWINGS BY G.W. HARTING



How shall a girl with a dual personality decide between two suitors? The amusing love affair of Eleanor, sometimes "Quebec Nell," and at others just as truly "Key West Nell."

JIM FARGUT scowled angrily as he turned sharply on his heel and retraced his steps down the street. His thick fingers closed around a small packet for which he had called at the jeweler's that morning.

"What she can see in that fellow Mortimer," he growled, "beats the Dutch!"

Mortimer Buccleugh, halting at the foot of a flight of stone steps which he had just descended, looked after the retreating figure with a strong sense of uneasiness.

"I don't want to be uppish about Eleanor's friends," he said, half aloud, "but that Fargut chap is so—so confoundedly American!" A sudden decision flashed into his eyes. "Confound it!" he exclaimed, in petulance with himself. "What's the use of dodging a thing? That's not playing the game."

He hurried after the disappearing figure, his long, athletic strides soon overtaking the shorter steps of his rival.

"Can you spare a minute, Mr. Fargut?" he asked pleasantly.

Jim, less a master of himself than his composed adversary, bit his cigar viciously and looked at the other askance.

"I'm busy," he said shortly, "but I suppose——"

"Let's drop in at my club," suggested the Englishman.

"Haven't got time to go so far," came the stiff reply, for Jim Fargut hardly liked to state crudely that he declined to accept his rival's hospitality, "but we might find a table here and have a high-ball."

He nodded, as he spoke, to the café of one of the larger hotels which they happened to be passing.

"Very well," assented Mortimer.

As they crossed the street, he made some casual references to European affairs, Jim contributing to the conversation nothing but grunts or monosyllabic replies.

A table found and the drinks brought, the New Yorker turned to his companion ungraciously.

"See here, Mr. Buccleugh," he said, "you didn't stop me in the street to talk about the Balkans. I'm busy today and can't afford to waste time. What's on your mind?"

Mortimer took a cigarette from his case.

"Miss Kapen is a very charming young lady," he remarked, as he struck a match.

"Suppose we leave her out of this," retorted Jim.

"Not at all," rejoined the English-

man pleasantly. "It's just about her that I want to talk to you. Look here, Mr. Fargut, we're both business men—let's be plain with each other. You will hardly deny that you are greatly interested in Miss Kapen?"

"How about yourself?"

"I admit it cheerfully."

"Well, if you want it straight, I am, too."

There was a pause, Mortimer slowly exhaling a puff of cigarette smoke and watching the spirally twisting vapor, Jim puffing heavily at his cigar.

"I generally make good in any deal I start on," was the latter's next remark.

"And I," quoth the Englishman, "usually win any game I play."

"Some one's going to get left."

"Yes," agreed Mortimer, "I'm afraid you will be disappointed."

"Has she said anything definite?"

"Not to me. Has she to you?"

Jim struggled with himself a moment, for the desire to bluff was strong.

"No," he answered at last truthfully, "she hasn't."

"Have you asked her?"

"Is that any business of yours?"

"Yes," affirmed Mortimer, "I think it is."

The American looked shrewdly across the table and realized the directness and honesty of his companion's purpose.

"Well," he replied, in answer to the question, "if you ask me point-blank that way, I don't mind telling you that I did ask her."

"Is it permitted to ask what she said?"

"She didn't say anything much. She just put me off."

"Miss Kapen put me off, too," said Mortimer.

"You've asked, too?"

"Yes."

"Didn't she give you any reason, either?"

"No. Perhaps I chose my time

badly. I had a curious feeling, just at the instant I began to speak to her, that I was talking to another girl."

The American took his cigar out of his mouth and stared.

"Funny," he said. "That's what happened to me. I thought she had you in mind. She seemed so cussed English."

"And I felt that she was preoccupied with thoughts of you. She seemed—if you will excuse the phrase—so cussed American."

A faint smile flickered over Jim's heavy features.

"Looks like an even break so far," with more geniality in his voice. "Suppose there's any one else?"

"I have no reason to suppose so, have you?"

"No. But you can never tell about a girl."

"Miss Kapen is difficult to understand."

"You said it!"

The hovering waiter obeyed the sign of a lifted finger and refilled the glasses.

"The question is," said Mortimer thoughtfully, "how much longer we're going to let this matter drag. I want to get back to my London branch."

"And I've got a trip out West I've been putting off too long as it is."

"Together, can't we conclude the matter?"

"Force her hand?"

"Yes, if you like to put it that way."

"I don't see why not," came the reply, after a moment of consideration. "Eleanor's no more likely to know her mind a year from now than she is today."

"Of course," said Mortimer, "in the old days, I could have challenged you to a duel, and, one of us being out of the way, Miss Kapen would have to marry the other, but the time has passed for that sort of thing. It's a pity."

"It is," agreed Jim. "A Colt forty-five caliber has some good points."

"I used to be fond of fencing when a boy."

The American pushed his glass aside impatiently.

"We're talking like a couple of movie heroes," he said. "You've something to propose. Out with it!"

"There's nothing new about the idea. I was thinking that one of us might go and see Miss Kapen to-morrow to plead his case, the other could go the day after, and the day following we would go together and hear the verdict."

"It's an idea," agreed Jim thoughtfully. "But the odds are on the one who goes last."

"Why?"

"One thing drives out another, in Eleanor's head."

"I'm willing to give you the chance." "No, thanks," replied Jim. "I don't want to be under any obligation."

"Toss for it?"

"Suits me."

"I spin, you call," said Mortimer, taking a coin from his pocket.

"Heads!" said Jim.

The quarter came down head uppermost.

"It's understood, then," said Mortimer, "we will both write to Miss Kapen this evening, explaining our agreement. I



The quarter came down head uppermost. "It's understood, then," said Mortimer, "we will both write to Miss Kapen this evening, explaining our agreement."

will see her to-morrow, you the day after to-morrow. On Friday afternoon—shall we say at four o'clock?—we will go together to receive her decision."

"I'm agreeable. Either way, I can get off next week."

The two men rose and separated at the door, the Englishman with a short bow, the American with a perfunctory nod.

Next morning, Eleanor Kapen, coming down to superintend her father's breakfast, found two letters beside her plate. Both were short and characteristic. She picked up the first with an easy smile, the second with a gesture of distaste. She had read both and was comparing them when her father came in.

"Mornin', Nell girl," he said. "What's the good word?"

"Nothing very important, father. Just letters from Mr. Buccleugh and Jim Fargut."

The old merchant noted the respect of the first appellation and the intimacy of the second, and wondered. It was not his habit to concern himself with psychological mysteries for more than a minute, so he contented himself with saying:

"Fargut's going ahead fast. Going into the importing line, too, I hear."

The bait evoked no bite, and David Kapen, looking at his daughter, saw that she was under the influence of what her mother and he, in privacy, called her "Quebec Nell" mood, as contrasted with her "Key West Nell" phase.

These somewhat curious names were the children of two limericks, one Kipling's famous verse of the boy of Quebec "who was buried in snow to the neck;" the other a skit of which Eleanor's scapegrace brother was the author. It ran:

There was a young girl of Key West,
Who was rarely, if ever, quite dressed,
But all the men swore
The less that she wore,
The more did she look at her best.

Eleanor's alternate frigid and tropical moods had been the despair of her family, ever since the iceberg phase had made its appearance when first she went to school.

Mrs. Kapen, hurrying down to breakfast, needed but one glance at her daughter to find out which mood was in the ascendant, and seeing Mortimer's handwriting on one of the envelopes beside Eleanor's plate, said pleasantly:

"Is Mr. Buccleugh coming to the dinner next week?"

"I do not know, mother," Eleanor answered frigidly, with a painful precision of syllabization. "He did not mention the matter."

"He's a fine young fellow," declared Mrs. Kapen, for it was openly understood in the household that the father favored the American in the race, while the mother was an ardent supporter of his rival; all in good part, however, for both parents were thoroughly modern and felt that the girl should choose for herself.

It was not until after lunch that Eleanor disclosed the situation to her mother.

"Mr. Buccleugh is coming this afternoon," she announced. "Would you like to read his letter, mother?"

Mrs. Kapen, her heart in a flutter, even as everything about her always seemed to be—the fluffy gray hair that would never keep its place, the spectacles that were always falling off, the wisps of lace that a battalion of pins were unable to attach securely—read the letter once, twice, then looked up bewildered.

"And you'll have to answer on Friday, Eleanor? Dear, what are you going to say?"

"I haven't the least idea, mother," answered Eleanor. "That must depend on circumstances."

Whereupon, Mrs. Kapen, knowing that it was this mood of dignity and

reticence which Mortimer especially admired, spun happy auguries for the success of her favorite.

When Mr. Buccleugh was announced, Eleanor came downstairs, cold, correct, and formal. Her dark hair lay close to her head, plainly brushed; her somewhat small brown eyes had a slumbrous veil over them; her dress—of the shot material she especially affected—hung in folds as rigid as those of statuary. As she opened the drawing-room door, however, and saw Mortimer standing waiting for her, there came a change.

A shiver passed down her frame, as if she were a painted figure on a curtain swayed by the wind, and then she darted forward impulsively, both hands outstretched.

"Flowers? For me? How lovely! I just dote on orchids! Isn't this the Masdevallia? I thought so. There's all the beating of the tom-toms and the smell of palm-leaf huts in that vivid scarlet! Don't you think so? Don't you love tom-toms? Thump-thump-thump, thump-thump-thump! Wouldn't it be lovely to dance and dance and dance with howling savages until you fell down exhausted?"

Mortimer looked at her. The electricity of an abounding vitality was in her. The well-brushed hair seemed to rise on the scalp and emit sparks, the brown eyes gleamed with a fire behind them, and as she whirled round like a bacchante to ring the bell for a servant to bring a vase for the flowers, the slightly lifting skirt of changing colors lured an invitation.

This was the Eleanor that Mortimer could never understand, the Eleanor he had called "so cursed American," though, as a matter of fact, nothing could be more un-American than Key West Nell, for a joyous abandon is the one thing unknown from Maine to California.

"I got your letter," she laughed in

an excited, high-pitched key. "Such a formal letter! Oh, you silly boy! It ought to be set to music. A minuet—tra-ta-ta-ta-ta, ta, ta, ta, ta, ta-ta, tra-ta-ta-ta, ta!" She paced a few steps delicately.

"I meant it seriously, Miss Kapen," said the Englishman, taken aback, as he always was by this mood.

"Of course you did! That's what's so funny. But tell me, did you hear the new 'cellist last night?"

And, do his best, Mortimer could not bring this daughter of Lilith back from the red world that rioted in her brain. With little hope and therefore little eloquence, he pleaded his cause before leaving, his formal phrases being met with wanton mockery.

Mrs. Kapen, finding Key West Nell at the dinner table, argued within herself that things had not gone well and grieved exceedingly, for she trusted and admired Mortimer.

Next morning, Eleanor did not come down to breakfast, a sure sign that the luxurious mood was in the ascendant, for Quebec Nell was the soul of punctuality and order. There were red rims around the mother's eyes, but the old merchant chuckled.

"Jim'll have a wild time with her if the thing goes through," he remarked, as he gave his wife the matutinal good-by kiss, "but she'll soon tame down. He's got a strong grip, has Jim."

Lunch was a whirlwind, Eleanor appearing in her most exotic dress that was permissible for daytime wear, and talking with a frankness that made even her scapegrace brother gasp. Correct servants had given notice, before, because of Key West Nell's conversation, but they never left, for they adored her, one and all.

Yet, when Jim Fargut called, the same phenomenon occurred as on the preceding day.

At the door of the drawing-room,

which she had approached like a tornado going to a rendezvous, the same fit of trembling seized her, and she entered the room with measured pace. It was a modern Ashtaroeth, changed, like Lot's wife, into a pillar.

"Candy, Mr. Fargut? I thank you. It was very kind of you to remember me, though, as you know, I seldom eat candy."

Jim, confused at this reception, though he had pictured it as a possibility, mumbled something about his letter.

"I received your letter," Eleanor replied, "and I thank you even more deeply for the honor you have shown me. You mentioned, I think, that you were going away?"

And, do his utmost, the aspiring suitor could not bring the conversation round to the subject of his call. At last he rose, despairingly.

"Eleanor—Nell," he said, "won't you marry me right off? I'm not much of a talker, but I can give you everything you want, and," he added, the man of him for a moment peeping out, "I'm just hungry for you, through and through."

"Your offer and your sentiments are very striking," the girl answered, in a tone that made the words sound as if they were cut from metal. "You've asked me to take the matter under advisement. I shall do so and let you know to-morrow."

Whereupon, Jim Fargut, feeling sure that he had lost, went to his club and swore so long and so savagely in the reading room sacred to silence that one of the directors, who had stepped up to reprove him, stood spellbound admiringly, and then tiptoed away.

At four o'clock, to the second, both men met at the foot of the steps leading up to the Kapen house. Neither said a word.

Shown into the drawing-room, both men remained standing, watching the door. Each felt that Eleanor's en-

trance would tell the story, even before a word was spoken.

Presently the handle turned, and Mortimer's hopes beat high. Key West Nell would never come so softly. Jim shifted uneasily.

Mrs. Kapen came in. She smiled a little wanly at the expression of disappointment on the faces of both men, but motioned them to chairs.

"Sit down, please," she said, ignoring conventional greetings, "because, in a way, I am acting as Eleanor's delegate in this matter. I know all about it, you see."

Jim, knowing Mrs. Kapen's preferences, braced himself for the worst. A minute or two elapsed, however, before the woman began to speak.

"I find it a little hard to know what to say," she said at last, "because I shall have to begin at the very beginning. Mr. Buccleugh, and you, Mr. Fargut, ought to understand that there is not one Eleanor Kapen, but two."

"You mean there are twins?" queried Jim, with a sudden fear that he had proposed to the wrong girl.

"Yes, in a way," said the mother confusedly, "but not exactly. Perhaps I had better say that there are not two Eleanors in the body, but there are two in the spirit. When my daughter was still a little girl——"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Kapen," said Jim, who was on tenterhooks, "I don't want to interrupt you, but you said you had come with Miss Kapen's answer. Can't you tell us that, first, and we'll both listen better then."

"Very well," said the mother, "she accepts you both. That is her answer."

The two men stared at each other and then at the mother.

"But that's absurd!" cried Jim hotly. The Englishman leaned forward.

"I think Mrs. Kapen has given us the clew," he said. "It would explain a great many things that have puzzled us. You were going to say, were you



Mrs. Kapen came in. She smiled a little wanly at the expression of disappointment on the faces of both men.

not, Mrs. Kapen, that Eleanor's is a case of dual or multiple personality? You mean there are two Eleanors, one of whom is in love with Mr. Fargut and the other of whom is gracious enough to express affection for me? Is that right?"

Mrs. Kapen breathed a deep sigh.

"That's just what I was trying to say," she declared. "The Eleanor that you know best, Mr. Buccleugh, is a personality that we never saw until my little girl was about ten years old. It is now the strongest and is growing stronger. The other, the Eleanor that Mr. Fargut knows best, is the original

personality. Which is the true one, I don't know."

"This is all tommyrot!" declared Jim.

"On the contrary," the Englishman protested, "it's a very well-known scientific fact. And it's the deuce and all to know what's going to happen."

"Why doesn't she come down herself?"

"She is not quite sure," explained Mrs. Kapen, "which Eleanor it would be that would come down, and if one Eleanor made a decision, it would be unjust to the other one. You have heard our names for the phases?"

Both men nodded.

"Well, Key West Nell would not only be unhappy with Mr. Buccleugh, but she knows she would make him unhappy; Quebec Nell feels the same way regarding Mr. Fargut. And so she asked me to say that you should settle it yourselves and she would marry either, since marrying both is impossible."

Jim gave a short laugh.

"It reads like a story," he said.

The Englishman, however, had a keener perception.

"It's a very real tragedy," he said, "for Miss Kapen, for the man she does not marry, and for the man she does.

Miss Kapen must be unhappy at least half the time, no matter which of us she marries. If she marries neither, she is doubly forlorn. The man who doesn't marry her loses his dream; the man who does has an almost impossible situation in his home for half the time. It's a very grave problem, Mrs. Kapen."

"Do you want to know what I think of it?" asked Jim.

"Certainly."

"I think it's all bosh!" declared the American, with the easy decision born of ignorance. "A girl has funny moods, and you all go talking about multiple personalities and that sort of stuff that people put in books, but you never see in real life—'Case of Becky' dope."

The Englishman shook his head.

"Look here, Buccleugh," the other went on, "I believe you're afraid!"

The tall, athletic figure leaned forward earnestly, his two hands on his knees.

"It happens that I've done a good deal of reading along this line," he said, "and—well, maybe you're right, maybe I am afraid."

"I'm not!" shouted Jim. "Good afternoon, Mr. Buccleugh!" He turned to the mother. "Bring in Eleanor! Any Eleanor! My Eleanor!"



LOVE SONG OF A BUSINESS MAN

I AM in love with a wealthy girl.

Her father has a large bank account.

She has servants to wait upon her.

She has several automobiles to ride in.

She has a gown for every occasion.

Yet that makes no difference to me.

I could love her just the same,

If her father had a larger bank account,

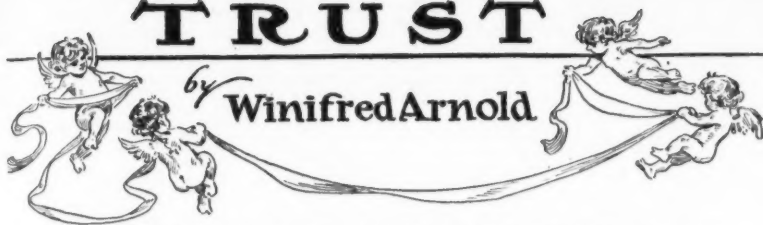
If she had a few more servants,

If she had a few more automobiles,

If she had a few more clothes.

CARL GLICK.

TRUST



Author of "A Small Town Adonis," "Only Ten Minutes," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

It was rather a bitter experience for a pair of lovers, but, as Betty herself learned, "Doubt is just one of the steps. Until you've fought through that you can never know the blessedness of perfect trust."

THEY were still seated just where they had placed themselves when they had entered Betty Brice's little living room twenty minutes before—the girl in her favorite corner of the green davenport, which flung into relief her spirited little bronze head and the touches of Oriental embroidery on her gown; the man in the carved Jacobean armchair to which she had imperiously directed him when he had moved to a place beside her on the couch. She wanted to talk to him, she had said.

And in that talk everything between them had utterly changed. With every word spoken in the girl's crisp, nervous tones, the atmosphere of the room had grown more and more tense, till the man at least could stand it no longer.

"But, Betty," he protested angrily, jumping to his feet, "this is all such absolute nonsense! All this talk about trusting and not trusting! We've been practically engaged for nearly a year. What have I done that makes you put me on sufferance for another month? Is it some sort of test? What in thunder do you suspect me of?"

The girl put up a weary hand.

"Nothing, Bob, nothing!" she said. "It's just that horrid feeling. I thought

I'd explained enough. Oh, can't you understand?"

"I understand that there's some reason why you don't trust me enough to marry me—or even to promise definitely," said the man doggedly. "That's enough, isn't it? I've been pretty patient all these months with your backing and filling, playing fast and loose, for I knew that that cursed job of yours was at the bottom of it. But for a month or so now, you've seemed—By Jove, when a chap has been rather unusually decent as men go, he gets a little tired——"

He broke off abruptly and, turning, strode to the front window, where he fixed unseeing eyes upon the little square below.

"Oh, but, Bob," reiterated the girl eagerly, "the trouble isn't with you! I've told you again and again. It's with me! This horrid, horrid feeling inside! Sometimes I'm so sure that I would trust you to the world's end. And then again"—the appeal in her voice died away, and she spoke more slowly, staring straight in front of her—"then again I feel as if I'd lost the power of trusting anybody—any man, that is! Oh, Bob, the things that those poor girls confide in me! Things that I can't tell, of course, even to you!"



"Oh, Bob, dear," she cried, "don't go like that! And don't be angry! Please! I just asked — It was the first thing that came into my head."

She shifted her tense, pitiful gaze to the window where he stood, and as if drawn by the power of magnetism, he turned and faced her.

"Oh, yes!" he retorted. "I know! Clever bids for your sympathy—coupled with a fine lot of dramatic instinct! Excellent stuff for me, but you're too easy, Betty, too emotional and sympathetic! It takes a colder-blooded woman than you are to run a newspaper confessional for chorus girls and 'salesladies.' You throw yourself into the job as if all those fool girls were your sisters and you were the

only hope they had in the world! It makes me sick to think what you may get yourself into one of these days, trying to haul them out! Trust! You'd be a heap better off if you didn't trust every word those girls tell you!"

Then all at once his irritation melted before the look in Betty Brice's eyes. With swift steps, he crossed the distance between them and dropped upon the davenport beside her, gathering her trembling little hands into his strong, eager clasp.

"Trust me, Betty!" he begged. "Marry me right away—to-morrow,

and stop this doubting! Haven't I proved myself? Haven't I?"

But the girl shook her head.

"Oh, if I only could!" she cried. "If I could only be *sure*! But I wouldn't dare—just now! Besides, there's my work—so many, many things I must do! No, Bob. I mustn't even think about it."

She tried to pull away her hands, with her little spirited toss of the head, like a mettlesome thoroughbred.

"Let's talk about something else—about— Let me see. There was something I wanted to ask you. Oh, yes, I know. Bob, do you know a man named Belden—Dick, that is, Richard Belden?"

With one angry motion, Bob Maynard released her hands and sprang to his feet.

"Never heard of him!" he answered curtly. "But very evidently I'd better be saying good-by."

He wheeled to the chair where lay his hat and stick. Instantly the girl was on her feet.

"Oh, Bob, dear," she cried, "don't go like that! And don't be angry. *Please!* I just asked— It was the first thing that came into my head." She laid a pleading hand on his arm. "Do be nice to me just one more little month, Bob dear! I'll answer then for keeps. Honestly, I will." Her whole face softened winningly, like a child's. Betty's swift changes were part of her charm.

But the man's face did not soften nor did his voice.

"Very well," he said slowly. "One more little month, as you call it. But that is absolutely the last, Betty. Once and for all now, you must decide whether I am trustworthy or not. I will not bear it to be doubted again."

He looked very fine and clean and strong as he stood there, very worthy of any woman's trust; and for one moment Betty Brice's heart clamored wildly that the one sure answer to her

doubts lay in the refuge of his arms. She hushed it slowly. It wouldn't be fair to Bob, she reminded herself, to marry him while she still had at times that sickening sense of doubt of him—of any man—just because he was a man.

By this time, Maynard had picked up his belongings and was standing before her with outstretched hand.

"So good-by," he was saying formally, "until a month from to-day."

A sudden little fear clutched at Betty's throat. She hadn't meant to banish him entirely. A month from to-day! So much might happen in a month.

"Why—aren't I going to see you till then?" she stammered and then, recovering herself with a gallant attempt at lightness, "Are you going to leave town?"

"Oh, no, probably not." Still that distant, detached tone in his voice that alarmed her. "But it will be better, perhaps, if we don't see each other. Besides, it will give me an excellent chance to make one of my 'retreats' and finish up my play. So it's good-by for a while." Once more he extended his hand.

There was nothing for her to do, of course, but accept it. Yet that inconsistent feminine sense of loneliness, of premonition, gripped her again as she did so. Why, he hadn't even spoken about writing to her. And when he went into "retreat," as his friends laughingly called it, he went—no one knew where and left no address. A whole month! So *much* might happen in a month!

Watching her face, feeling her hesitation, Bob Maynard withdrew his hand sharply.

"More doubts already?" he asked, with a bitter little sketch of a laugh. "Thinking, are you, of the foolish jokes they make about my going off by myself to work—Gilman and Jack

Stubbs and Mrs. Jack and the rest? Surely you know— Oh, what's the use?" He turned abruptly toward the door.

In an instant Betty was beside him.

"Don't be foolish, Bob!" she cried. "Of course I understand! Don't I write myself? I wasn't thinking of that at all. It was only—I was just wondering—" She hesitated, stammered, then clutched at the first excuse that presented itself: "About that Mr. Belden—you know. If you hear anything about him, you'll let me know, won't you? Even if you aren't writing letters?"

The moment the words were out of her mouth, she realized how stupid they were, but the queer look that came into his eyes only forced her to blunder on.

"It's very important," she finished awkwardly.

"Evidently." Bob's hand was on the doorknob now. "Belden? Robert Belden, I think you said. Oh, no, Richard. I will inquire. Good-by, then, till I see you again." He opened the door, bowed stiffly with hat in hand, closed the door, and was gone.

For one long moment, Betty stood still listening. The sound of the little limp with which he descended the stairs, memento of the first battle of the Marne, tugged like a hand at her heart. Yielding to an uncontrollable impulse, she rushed to the window and thrust out her head. She must call him back, say that she did trust him—

Then, just at the foot of the steps, he stopped to speak to a man going by, a rather over-dressed, flashy-looking man. Suddenly she remembered the queer look that had come into his eyes when she had spoken the name Belden—the queer note in his voice as he had answered. Men always stood by one another, they said, in matters of women. Could it be that Bob did know Richard Belden, and that he—

She drew in her head slowly and shrugged her shoulders. There it was again! Suspicion—lack of trust! Oh, how hateful life was! With a determined effort, she forced herself to think of other things—of her work at the office, her letters.

At least she could find out if that Belden had answered the letter from her lawyers. Hastily she crossed the room, took a key from her hand bag, and descended the stairs to the little group of mail boxes in the vestibule.

There were in her box three letters, two circulars, and a bill, but the letter from her lawyers was not among them. One of the letters was large and square and violently purple in color.

"Dulcie Myers again," she said, and tore it open eagerly.

"Oh, Dearest, Darling Miss Brice," pleaded the large, hysterical-looking purple scrawl. "Do, *do* get the letters for me right now! They say Jack's company may come home any time now. They might even be on the ocean now, and Jack would just kill me if he knew! Oh, Miss Brice, won't you go to Dick Belden, at the Elba Apartments, and get them for me? You'll never get them through a lawyer, but if you would go yourself, Dick would do anything for a pretty woman. He told me he would give them to me if I came, but I don't dare, he's too fascinating. I don't know what I might do. But if you don't, of course I'll have to. Oh, Miss Brice—"

And so on and on, every page revealing the same story of the silly little war bride hungry for pleasure and excitement, and the "other man" who had undertaken to provide them in the soldier husband's absence.

Betty Brice's lips grew very stern, her eyes very big and angry, as she read. The case of this girl, Dulcie Myers, appealed to her as if she were indeed her sister, as Bob Maynard had said. The girl was desperate about

those compromising letters. And that vile man was holding them until— There was evidently only one thing to do. She herself must go to the Elba.

Her slim figure stiffened valorously, and with that utter forgetfulness of self which made her work at once so successful and so dangerous, she bundled the rest of her mail into her desk, donned her coat and hat as if she were St. George arraying himself to encounter the dragon, and hurried out of doors.

On her way down the subway steps, however, her mood changed all at once, and she stopped and smiled.

How furious Bob would be if he knew about this! How absolutely crazy he would think her! To go alone to see such a man as that—in his own apartment! Bob didn't realize how well she could take care of herself.

He would certainly be astonished. He—

With a sudden jerk, she pulled her mind back to the subject in hand. How perfectly ridiculous to feel this way about Bob *now*! In fact, to be thinking about him at all, when she ought instead to be going over her story—planning how to meet and manage this other man—this *beast*!

Instantly the smile faded, and an intent, white look took its place, a look that changed it at one and the same time to steel and to flame. It was with



Betty Brice's lips grew very stern, her eyes very big and angry as she read.

this look on her face that she had once and again fought the beasts of this modern Ephesus in behalf of the weak girls whom she befriended, and had emerged unscathed and victorious.

She reached the Elba, however, only to meet with disappointment.

"Mistah Belden's not in, mom," said the elevator boy and, "No, mom, I don't expect he will be in this evenin'." And there was about his wide and gleaming grin more than a hint of knowing amusement.

When she came again the next day, the answer was the same, and again the third day, with the addition that "heaps o' ladies seemed to be wantin' to see Mr. Belden." And the grin was, if possible, broader.

For the first time since she had begun her work, Betty Brice began to feel uncomfortable, and angry with herself for feeling uncomfortable. What was there about this Richard Belden, she asked herself as she turned away. He was no worse than plenty of other men whom she had encountered, whom she had visited in the same unconventional way. And yet—from the first—she had had a feeling, a queer, instinctive dread. It was that which had made her try to handle the matter through her lawyer instead of directly, as usual. She— Perhaps if she had some one to go with her.

Returning to her office, she tried to telephone to Bob, but at his apartment house they told her that he had gone away the day before for a month, leaving no address.

It was what she should have expected, of course, but she laid down the receiver with a sickening sense of disappointment. There was nobody else whom she wanted to take with her on such an errand. Well, she would just have to go alone, then. She had, of course, plenty of times before. It was silly to make such a fuss about this.

The feeling, however, persisted. Half a dozen times the next two days she told herself that she must go, and then half a dozen times excused herself. She was too busy just then, or she was putting this case ahead of more important things, or she would better try once more to hear from her lawyers.

It was after she had called them up for the fifth time that another idea occurred to her. Why not call Mr. Belden upon the telephone, too, and make an appointment? Usually she

counted upon the value of a surprise visit, but time was getting very short. There was no Richard Belden in the telephone book, so she called the Elba.

"Mr. Belden is not here at present," said the voice that answered. "He has gone out of town for a while. No, ma'am, I can't tell you where to reach him. He didn't leave no address."

A daring idea popped into Betty Brice's head.

"Oh, then he must have left a message for me with the people in the next apartment," she said glibly. "What is the name, please? I seem to have forgotten."

"Why, Mrs. Charlton is right across the hall, and Mr. Bruce is next below, and the Cortlandts— Which one shall I connect you with?"

"I'll call on the private line," answered Betty hastily, and hung up.

Two hours later, arranging her time carefully so that there would be an elevator boy on who had not seen her before, Betty appeared again at the Elba, asking, this time, for Mrs. Charlton.

The boy turned toward the speaking tube, but she stopped him with a swift gesture and a smile.

"Oh, don't stop to call her," she said. "Just take me right up. I'm awfully late for dinner as it is."

Three minutes later, she was using a skeleton key on the door opposite the one which the boy had indicated as Mrs. Charlton's. The next moment she was fumbling for the wall switch which she guessed must be near at hand, and then, having found it, was studying the contents of the room. Yes, there was the desk—a big office desk, as she had hoped, but closed and locked. Swiftly she fixed in her mind its location and turned off the light. Feeling her way through the semidarkness, she found the desk, which she lighted with a small shaded bulb that hung just above it. Then, hastily, but carefully,

she began to try in the lock key after key from the bag that hung on her arm.

So intent was she on her work that she did not even notice the sound of another key in the lock outside, for her own was turning, turning! The sound of the opening door, however, was not to be mistaken and, throwing up the desk front with a bang, she sprang to her feet, whirled about, and met the full glare of the lights as they were switched on. At first she could see only a man's figure.

"Pardon me for interrupting you, madam," said a cool, amused-sounding voice, and then, changing its tone abruptly to one of consternation, "Betty Brice, you! Good heavens!"

Just at that moment the dazzle in her eyes cleared, and with a little gasp of horror, Betty saw that the man who had unlocked the door and entered was Bob Maynard! For a moment they stood staring at each other incredulously. Then both began to speak at once.

"What—are—you——"

Both stopped speaking.

Betty recovered herself first.

"I came," she began again, "to get some letters——" She turned toward the desk as she spoke, and then stopped again, throwing her left hand in a little frightened gesture over her mouth. For there, on top of an untidy drift of white manuscript paper covered with Bob's neat handwriting, lay a little sprawling bunch of envelopes. Large, square purple envelopes, they were, and across the face of the top one ran the address in a large, familiar purple scrawl:

"Mr. Richard Stearns Belden,

"The Elba Apartments,

"City."

With sickening clearness, she saw it all now. In this other life of his, Bob Maynard was Richard Stearns Belden. And here—in this apartment——

She reached a trembling hand toward the top envelope and pulled out the letter it enclosed. There was no mistake. "Dear, Darling Dick," it began, and was signed, "Your very own Dulcie."

Blindly she gathered up the rest of the little pile and turned again to face Bob. He was at the windows pulling down the shades. Somehow, she loathed him the more for this caution.

"For one moment," she said, in a dull, weary voice, "I hoped that I was in the wrong apartment, but it is yours, isn't it?"

He nodded.

"Then, Bob, Bob, what can I say to you?" Her voice broke in a sob, and with a swift little rush, she crossed the room to the outer door. "Only to say good-by—*forever!*" she cried and flung it open.

"But, Betty," protested Maynard's voice, "wait! Surely——"

She made no answer, but shut the door inexorably behind her, just as the door opposite opened, and a little group of people emerged, filling the little hall with gay chatter and laughter.

"Mrs. Charlton," registered Betty's mind automatically, "and her real guests."

They looked at her rather queerly, she thought. Probably they knew Mr. Richard Belden's reputation—and the kind of girls who came alone to see him.

But what did she care? When your house of life was falling in ruins and going up in flames around you, you didn't notice the chirping of the birds in the tree near by.

For Bob had failed her! Bob was like all the rest! He had deceived this Dulcie Myers and nobody knew how many more! He was that beast, Dick Belden—Bob, whom she had trusted so!

For suddenly she realized how she had trusted him. Down underneath

her silly imaginings, deep in her soul had been a trust in Bob and Bob's honor and truth which had never wavered, upon which she had founded her world. Why else, now, should she feel as if it were shaken from its very foundations?

She never remembered afterward how she got home that night, except that she walked up one street, down another, across a third—hours and hours of walking till some blind homing instinct brought her finally, spent and tottering with fatigue, to her own door. Then she dragged herself upstairs and, stopping only to throw down her hat, dropped upon the big green davenport where she and Bob had sat that afternoon. It seemed so long ago. Could it be only four days?

She was too tired to think consecutively, but as she lay there in the semidarkness, pictures and phrases began to flash across her mind as if it were a moving-picture screen—the way Bob had looked as he had stood there saying good-by, as he had walked off across the square the time he had told her of his mother's death; that night at the opera when he had first made love to her; things he had said, such fine little things—and in his plays, too, revealing the fineness of his soul. (Purple envelopes! Purple!)

In the face of these things could she believe in this other side of him that would hide away, under an alias, to philander with a common little girl like Dulcie Myers, behind a soldier husband's back? (Purple envelopes on a drift of white.) Could she believe—

The name of a book by James that she had read began to repeat itself insistently in her mind: "The Will to Believe," "The Will to Believe." Half-forgotten phrases from the book came to her, flashing across the screen:

"Faith in a fact can help create a fact."

"Believe what is in the line of your needs."

"Faith in a fact can help create a fact."

"Believe——"

Again those purple envelopes flaunting through the darkness!

Then over against them incongruously, Bob's face, his voice—as he had said:

"I will not bear it to be doubted again."

"The Will to Believe! The Will to Believe!"

With a sudden, swift movement she pulled herself to a sitting posture, turning and putting her feet on the floor. The first gleams of dawn were peeping in at the window. One cloud, she noted, was an exquisite pink.

She stooped and picked up her hand bag, which was lying on the floor, and took out the hateful purple pile of letters.

"One—two—three—four—five—six." She spread them on her knees. "One—two—three——" She counted mutely with her fingers.

Then slowly, distinctly, she spoke aloud, reciting her credo:

"In spite of you—hidden there—in his locked desk—in his apartment—I believe in Robert Maynard with all my heart and soul! In spite of you—I will trust Robert Maynard—all the days of my life."

Then, simply, like a child, she drew up her feet again, snuggled down into the corner of the davenport, and fell fast asleep. The letters slipped unregarded to the floor.

When she awakened, the room was flooded with spring sunlight.

"Why, Bob!" she whispered, smiling; and then, the smile deepening, she turned toward the sunlit window.

"I must have been dreaming," she said aloud. She caught sight of the letters lying on the floor and stooped over to pick them up. "And part of it," she added slowly, "was a very bad dream!"



He flung himself down before her.
"Will you forgive me?" he pleaded.

For a moment she sat looking at the letters in her hands; then the smile came back to her lips.

"I believe!" she said and, rising, she laid the little bundle on her desk.

It was an unusually busy day at the office, but Betty, moving through her duties with a curious detachment of body, was conscious of an unusual clarity of mind and poise of spirit.

When the day was over, she knew that she was going in some way to arrange to see Bob, but for the present she was not at all worried about details. It would be all right.

To her serenity, it did not even seem strange that she should meet him on the sidewalk just as she reached her door.

"I was waiting for you," he said. "I have something to give you and a confession to make."

"Yes?" she answered quietly. "I'm very glad to see you, Bob, because I have something to say to you, too." She preceded him into her little living room.

Then, as he closed the door, she turned toward him, and before the miracle of her smile, Bob Maynard caught his breath.

"I want to tell you," she said, "that I trust you now, Bob, absolutely, utterly, and for always, no matter how things may seem."

His face transfigured with joy, Maynard sprang toward her with his arms outstretched. Then, just before they touched her, he caught himself back sharply.

"Even in the face of these?" he cried poignantly. "Oh, Betty, even in the face of these?"

From the pocket of his coat, he drew out another packet of purple letters and held them toward her. His lean brown hand was trembling uncontrollably.

Betty's serene poise never wavered.

"Yes," she said, just glancing at the package and then lifting her gaze again to his eyes, "in the face of anything." The clear sweetness of her smile was enough to make any man proud, and then, having made him proud, to humble him in the dust.

Bob Maynard's answer was a groan. For a moment he stood silent. Then:

"How can I ever tell you—after that?" he said. "Betty—this is what I came to confess: When I saw you in my room last night, I thought you had come there to see that Belden."

The smile on Betty's lips changed subtly, swiftly, losing its exalted look, becoming at once less poignant and more human. There was, I fear, just a wee touch of mischief in her eyes, as she answered with childlike candor—Betty always could change with the swiftness of an opal:

"I did—three or four times. Come—let's sit down. I'm awfully tired." She led the way toward the davenport.

But Maynard, though following her, continued to stand.

"Not until you have heard all I have to say," he said gravely. "Betty, you don't understand. For a few foolish hours, I thought that you were the girl

who wrote those letters—the girl Belden wrote about here."

He thrust an open letter into her hand. Even in her excitement, Betty noted instinctively and with a feeling of relief that the paper was white. Would she always notice the color of letters now, she wondered.

"Read it," he commanded.

Betty obeyed. But after the first three words, she lifted her eyes.

"My dear Tenant?" she said interrogatively. "Tenant?"

"Oh, yes." Maynard shook his head, almost impatient of such minor details. "You told me to ask about him, so I did. And the first fellow I struck was a real-estate man. And he said, 'All I know is that he wants to sublet his apartment for a while. Been called out of town unexpectedly.'"

"So I said I'd take it for a month unless he found somebody else. And I moved right in. And yesterday I got that letter there. Go on—read it aloud."

"MY DEAR TENANT: This is to warn you that you've probably rented a feminine mess or two along with my apartment. For the friend who cleared my desk for me overlooked a few of the tender missives that I had locked away there. Don't hand them to the lawyers, that's a good fellow, but if one little lady comes after hers—why, she wants 'em mighty badly! I bequeath her and them to you with my blessing. Verb sap!

"R. S. B."

Betty glanced up with blazing eyes. "The scoundrel!" she cried. "The unspeakable beast! Oh, can't something be done?"

Maynard shook his head.

"Not with that," he said. "It says nothing directly. But do you understand, Betty? I thought—I thought——" He paused.

"You thought? Go on."

"I had just received the letter," went on Bob miserably, "and I came back and found you standing there at the desk. And you acted—you said——"

And you had talked about him, you know. Betty, I went wild with jealousy—just mad!"

"And then?" prompted Betty quietly. "You know better now? How did you find out?"

"This afternoon I happened to turn the letter over. And there was a postscript. See! Look!" He snatched the letter from her hands and turned the page. "That explains."

"P. S.—The letters are stuck in a row of tapes on the under side of the roll top. My own invention. Unpatented. B."

It seemed so incredible, so miraculous. She read it again and yet again. Yes, that was how they had fallen—when she had flung back the top. And she had been right to trust—to trust!

Her heart sang so that she could hardly hear Bob's voice, could only gaze at him with wide, rapture-filled eyes.

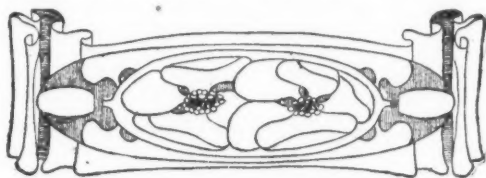
"So I found the rest," he was saying, "the purple and some others. And then I understood your visit—and what you must think of me——"

She had been right to trust!

"Those locked in my desk—and—and your trusting me in the face of that! I've talked so much about trust, but when it came to the showdown, you were the one. Oh, Betty, I could kneel at your little feet!" He flung himself down before her, seizing both of her hands in his, "Will you forgive me?" he pleaded.

Betty shook her head.

"There's nothing to forgive," she said gently. "Or if there were, think of the times I've doubted you! But doubt is just one of the steps; dear. Until you've fought through that you can never know the blessedness of perfect trust."



MUTATION

WHEN Maytime was around me,
Just melting into June,
With roses to surround me,
And many a thrush's tune,
I sang of age that sorrowed—
Of withered age, and tears,
And from the future borrowed
The grief of unliv'd years.

Oh, for the song of thrushes,
Oh, for one rose of June,
When swift joy blends and crushes
The fragrance with the tune!
Untouched of icy fingers
That blight each mortal thing,
Lo, in my heart there lingers
The deathless song of spring!

MARY BRENT WHITESIDE.



WHAT THE STARS SAY

by Madame Renée Longuille

Would you know yourself—your character, your disposition, your traits, your lucky days? Would you know some of the things that are likely to happen to you in the future? If so, you will be interested in following each month Madame Longuille's articles on Astrology.

GEMINI

BETWEEN May 20th and June 21st of any year, the Sun passes through the constellation or group of stars known as Gemini, the Sign of the Twins. The ruling planet is Mercury. This is the third sign of the zodiac, an airy, mutable sign, belonging to the intellectual trinity. It endows all those born at this time with certain particular characteristics. Usually they possess well-made bodies, with long hands and arms. The hair is generally of a beautiful brown shade, and the eyes either hazel or of a greenish tinge. These people often possess good dispositions, being polite and affable to all. They are fond of reading, especially along scientific lines. They are never intemperate in either eating or drinking, and are generally regarded as very good members of society, although they never could be strict or rigid Puritans in any way. Their changeable and dual natures, however, make them a type peculiar to themselves. They can be brave and at the same time cowardly, generous, yet stingy; and at times when they seem most unhappy, they are really enjoying their misery by a keen analysis and study of themselves from the outside.

At the same time, these seemingly

contradictory traits are only expressions of a versatile nature. These people are very interesting, and are not so easily understood as natives of other signs, yet they are rarely blamed for being inconsistent. They willingly and readily embrace new ideas in everything, even if only to gratify their love of change. They are wonderful people to call upon in any emergency. Their versatility gives them the ability to do the right thing at the right time. They are never upset or confused by being suddenly thrust into different surroundings; in fact, they are quite at their best. They often wish to be in two places at the same time, never seem to be contented for long anywhere, and as soon as the newness of a place is exhausted, they are nervous and restless until they find themselves again in new surroundings.

Always starting some new work before their first task is completed, or having too many irons in the fire, is a marked trait of these complex natures. We find more talented people in this sign than in any other. Although the tendency to scatter their abilities makes them more or less unreliable and unsettled, they possess the rare quality of being able to adjust themselves to im-

mediate circumstances. They are clever, quick-witted, and rather ambitious. They make agreeable companions, but a mysterious inclination to believe that some wrong is directed toward them sometimes spoils the best friendships of these Gemini natives. They must have variety, even in friends, for it is very important to the Gemini type of person that change must enter into every phase of his life. To all appearances, they are very silent people, being what is known as "good listeners," until a topic is started of which they are particularly fond; then they show a wonderful flow of speech, which is clever and always refined.

DECANATES.

To get a little nearer the individual characters, this sign, as all the others, may be divided into three different periods or decanates. Each decanate either exaggerates or diminishes the general qualities of the sign. Those born on any one of the last ten days of May are said to be under the first decanate, and are supposed to be truer Gemini types. Most of the influence of the preceding sign has passed over, and the following sign is yet too far away to cast any influence. This first type consequently shows to a marked degree the chief characteristic of duality in their natures. They are always unsettled, very seldom coming to any definite conclusion for themselves; and even if they do determine on any course, they are immediately sure it should have been different. They are constantly starting new work, but from lack of concentration, it is seldom finished, although as far as the task has gone, it may be most clever and give signs of wonderful possibilities. The least interference or unhappiness will cause them to worry and become excited, therefore making them more confused and their minds less concentrated than ever. This type of person is constantly

changing his place of abode and also his occupation.

As the Sun creeps along further into the sign, the qualities are softened and more subdued. Those born during the first ten days of June are in the second decanate, and the dualistic nature is better balanced or put to superior uses. Still seeing two sides to everything, this type can use the quality to compare and judge correctly. They are not so nervous or restless.

The third types are born between the 10th and 20th of June. They are more favored and more able to decide questions for themselves. The mind is not so easily flurried; therefore, they can concentrate much longer than those born in the foregoing decanates and can carry their work to a higher degree of completion. These people are most agreeable to meet, are good entertainers, benevolent, kind, and exceedingly refined. Developed types under the influence of this decanate are especially fond of flowers, have a wonderful knowledge of the fine arts, and are generally very intelligent individuals. They are pure-minded people, often having real inspirations.

HEALTH AND DISEASE.

The ancient astrologers believed all persons coming under the influence of this sign to be exempt from sudden diseases or accidents. But it is easy to see that all people of the Gemini temperament will be likely to disorders of a nervous type. The health will be greatly impaired by worry and excitement, to which the Gemini natives succumb more readily than do those of any other sign. Consequently a great deal of sleep is the wisest remedy and surest cure for all of the Gemini maladies, and these people should also give due heed to the laws of diet. Gemini governs the lungs, hands, arms, eyes, and ears. Very often, from overactivity or worry, natives will show a tend-

ency to consumption or lung troubles, exhaustion or general debility. The constitution is never overstrong, and readily breaks down under any extra strain or loss of sleep.

CHILDREN.

Gemini children make bright, intelligent pupils. The tendency to fly from one task to another needs sensible controlling and regulating. These children are very likely to receive much reprimanding from teachers and parents, who do not understand their inherent qualities. Children of other signs may study one subject a day, sit in one seat or the same room much of the time, and be happy and do their best work, but not Gemini children. They must have change in every way; monotony in anything kills their best efforts. They will become nervous and exceedingly irritable if variety is not given them in both amusements and studies. They require an exceptional amount of sleep and enough physical exercise in the open air to tire their bodies. Twelve hours sleep out of the twenty-four are not too much for the sensitive, nervous children of Gemini, whose constitutions are so easily undermined by their restless waking hours. It is often very difficult for the parent or teacher to determine on a definite course of study for these children. They show early in life a taste for literature, and at the same time distinct ability in drawing and painting. All these should be encouraged, and the strongest will surely develop in time. After the decision is made, they need much help to concentrate their efforts along their chosen line.

EMPLOYMENT.

People who are of the Gemini type can seldom be happy following one occupation at a time. They must have several different ways to busy their minds. Talented artists of the Gemini type are found often to be at the same

time good short-story writers, and if it were possible to compel them to finish the works they start, their versatility of subjects would be astonishing. Color sense in Gemini natives is remarkably developed, especially among women. They make good editors and reporters on newspapers, excellent bookkeepers or accountants, and do well in any capacity where they may act for another person. They make more money by engaging in small things or collecting money in small sums than by attempting any large undertaking or working out one complete plan. However, they usually succeed in any work that requires sharpness of wit and not too much concentration. The artists whose studios are full of swift sketches and clever "starts," but who have to be driven almost by want to finish any picture, are invariably of the Gemini type. As teachers, they have a wonderful ability because they can readily adapt their minds to suit the needs of all varieties of pupils. However, they are more brilliant and witty than deep and thorough, and afford much amusement and entertainment in their teaching. They are greatly attracted to all educational work and live more in the mind than in the feelings. This causes them to be more or less materialistic and ever wavering between belief and doubt in their occupations. They are scrupulously honest in business, fair-minded and generous.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE.

Duality describes the love affairs of both the men and women of this sign. Before they marry, the affections are changeable and freakish, and they enjoy many affairs of the heart, appearing never to care more for one than another. But afterward they make extremely faithful and constant husbands or wives, although they frequently acquire a cold, reserved manner. Probably this comes from being spiritually

unhappy, especially if they marry those who are not so refined and sensitive. On this account, they should be extra cautious in choosing marriage partners, for it will depend largely on the purity and intellect of these latter whether or not the fine, easily affected feelings of the Geminians will be jarred or made unhappy and eventually chafe under the marriage tie. Those born under the well-balanced, amiable sign of Libra, or between September 22d and October 21st of any year, also those born in the sign Aquarius, or between January 20th and February 18th, are likely to prove good partners. Gemini people might find happiness also if the partner had the Moon in Gemini, Libra, or Aquarius on his or her horoscope at birth. Those having the Moon in Aries at the time of birth would be a good choice for the native of Gemini.

NOTED PEOPLE.

Among the most interesting people born while the Sun was passing through Gemini, was Ralph Waldo Emerson, a developed, advanced type of this literary sign. A more versatile writer would be hard to find. Queen Victoria also had the Sun in this sign, and it cannot be denied that this wonderful woman was endowed with many seemingly contradictory qualities. Others who found their homes in Gemini are Dante, Tom Moore, Carmen Sylva, and Jay Gould.

GENERAL PREDICTIONS.

Many ups and downs in life are predicted for the natives of this sign, but in a general way, they are due to the acts of the natives themselves. At times they are quite sure to find themselves penniless, and then again their pockets will be full. The same is predicted for every position held in life, for at times the way will seem very brilliant, and at others most unassuming and modest. It is comparatively safe to predict fam-

ily disagreements or hardships brought about by the natives' fathers, who will probably be fond of roaming.

Twins are often born to the natives with the Sun in Gemini, and as a general rule their children are numerous, but there are likely to be serious differences of opinion between the children themselves or between the children and parents. This dual sign foretells more than one marriage or strong attachment in life. Friends are apt to be of all kinds and sorts, many of a jealous type, one of whom might turn into a bitter enemy. Even bodily harm is to be feared from relatives-in-law or people with whom the native is associated in business.

For any change whatever—starting a new enterprise, taking a journey, or removing their homes—Gemini people should always choose Wednesday as their most fortunate day of the week. The beryl is the lucky stone. A rich yellow is their color. Bittersweet, lily of the valley, and myrtle are the flowers.

Horoscope of A. H.—Born Seaford, Delaware, June 10, 1898, 12.30 a. m. If your birth hour is approximately correct, you were born with the Sun in Gemini in the third house, which is a good position for journeying. It signifies mentality, and you should possess imagination. It gives you a strong, keen intellect, and you ought to succeed through writing, study, or teaching science or literature. Neptune is also in this house, a fortunate position. Your mind is inclined to things mystical, and you have æsthetic tastes. Try always to note your dreams, as they may often be very significant. This position of Neptune inclines to travel, especially by water.

The Moon is in the twelfth house and afflicted by Mercury and Uranus. This is a warning to guard yourself against deceptions or fraud, especially in money matters. If you are likely to be left a legacy, much hard, careful

work would have to be done to protect you from dishonest dealings. The Moon thus situated shows you to be rather mediumistic, somewhat romantic, but hospitable and sympathetic.

Mercury's position would augur success through writing or teaching, also financial work with others, but never alone. Again, there are indications of your traveling. But you are very apt to scatter your abilities and thus be a little unreliable, although quick and brilliant.

Venus is so placed as to help you greatly in advanced years and at the end of your life. You ought to be very fond of one parent, through whom you will profit. There are indications here of a hindrance to your marriage from a parent, who might object to a difference in age or position.

Jupiter in Libra makes you charitable and kind and inclines you somewhat to poetry. This is a good position for long or short journeys, and all through your map there are many indications of fortunate journeys.

Saturn is in Sagittarius in the eighth house, and might cause you disappointment in a legacy or marriage, but foretells a peaceful old age and end of life.

The Moon, by her secondary motion, is now passing through your eighth house, and makes an aspect with Uranus about the middle of this summer. This might cause you a change of some kind, perhaps taking up some new work whereby you will greatly profit, because, by the early fall, Jupiter, the planet of good luck and money, is throwing good aspects, and you will be well paid for your services. But the last of the year or the first of 1920, the Moon will probably come into conjunction with Saturn in your house of death. You might at this time be depressed greatly by the sickness or death of a near relative. The next influence is from Venus, a strong aspect occurring from the house of pleasure and affairs of the heart, coming the middle of the summer of 1920. This makes you happy and promises a very pleasant period or perhaps a happy journey.

THE VIEWPOINT

TEN years ago, I said of her: "She is the very essence of mystery, the poetry of love, a Venus veiled—adorable and bewitching."

To-day, when I saw her, I said: "Commonplace, conventional, dull, prosy."

I would willingly, however, return to my viewpoint of ten years ago, if she had not assured me that she adores her husband.

THE HOME-COMING

HE was returning home from the war. No one knew of his coming—least of all she who sent him off to battle with tears and the promise that she would be waiting when he came back in triumph.

So he planned to call her up on the telephone first, and tease her a little, maybe, telling her it was some one else—Frank, or John, or any name but his own.

He knew she would reply: "Why, Ed, are you home? It sounds so good to hear your voice again!"

Then would he know that his little game had failed, but he would be happy in the failure.

He heard her voice on the telephone.

"This is Frank," he said.

"Oh, hello, Frank!" she said. "Did you know you left your umbrella here last night?"



ILLUSTRATED
BY O'CARTER

Author of "The New Snobbery," "Adventure," etc.

SHE was the meekest and most downtrodden of all the girls in the employ of Wadsworth, Smythe & Rives. I used to ask her, for Heaven's sake, to take a brace and not to act as if she were let stay on the earth's surface as a favor. I tried to make her see that she had just as much right to a few inches of ground room as any one else, but I never had any luck. She would blink at me from behind her glasses, and she would smile that half-scared smile of hers—as if she were afraid you'd misunderstand it and not like it—and she would say:

"Cherry, I don't think I'm lacking in proper pride, but I must keep my position. I am not—ahem"—she would cough a little here and get sort of yellow-pink behind the ears—"I am not as young as you, my dear girl. I haven't got as long to save for my old age."

But she wouldn't ever tell me how old she was. I used to guess about forty-five, or some days it seemed more like fifty-five. She always got kind of stiff when I made the guesses, so by and by I just said:

"Oh, a woman's as old as she looks, and no older, and you've got a good,

long saving time ahead of you. Anyway, don't take Smythe's bellowings like they were the last trump. The way you jump when that old Turk issues out of his lair—"

"I like to give satisfaction, Cherry," Miss Marigold would say to me primly. "Huh!" I would say.

It wasn't her first name that was Marigold, you understand. Nothing as romantic as a first name like that ever happened to her. Her first name, if you please, wished on her by parents who might have been supposed to have some sort of feeling for her, was Jemima. Jemima Marigold by name, and Jemima Marigold by nature—that is, stiff and old-fashioned and funny as something out of a haircloth trunk in an attic, and yet kind of sweet.

I boarded in the same house with her, and so I got to know her better than the other girls in the office did. And I knew that nobody ever came to see her—male or female, young or old. All her folks were dead, up in New England somewhere, and how she ever got up spunk to come down to New York and get a job is beyond me. Why, she'd always stand at the street corner waiting for the traffic officer's sig-

nal before she'd dare to cross the street. She was that kind!

I wormed it out of her that she'd never had a beau or a proposal in all her life. Think of it! It gave me the shivers. She was sort of cool to my questioning about it, but I didn't let that sheer me off from my search after information. She said to me, in her prim way:

"These are very intimate topics, Cherry, and ones concerning which I have always been reticent."

But I said: "Aw, reticence be blowed! It eats you up after a while, like rust. Tell your troubles to the first person you can find to listen to them—that's my motto. It keeps away crow's-feet!"

She smiled; I don't think I ever heard her give a real laugh in those days. And then she sighed, and then she did slip me a bit of information—like I've said. It made me want to swear to think there was a woman in the world—a woman in our office—a woman that lived in the very same house with me—that had never had any attention. Gee, when there were loads of us who could have spared her two or three proposals and never known the difference! She explained about a strict father and a bedridden mother in her youth—the "natural mating time," she called it. She was chock-full of fancy expressions. She took all her romance out in reading novels.

It was that same night that I got it out of her—pried it, to tell the truth—that those robber barons we worked for had never given her a raise in all the twelve years she'd worked for them. She admitted that she had never asked for it—was scared to; afraid that if their attention was particularly called to her, they'd swiftly fire her. So that old-age pension fund of hers had reached the noble sum of two hundred and thirty-one dollars!

It seemed to me I couldn't bear it.

There was an aisle man from Stoddard-Higgins' boarding at our house. He wasn't like the aisle men you read about. I don't believe he ever asked a girl to dinner in his life, much less to a cabaret or a joy ride, and he was short and quiet and gray haired and gray mustached. They say he's a dandy, though, and that Stoddard-Higgins sets great store by him.

Well, there was, as I was saying, Mr. Beecher boarding in our house. He was a bachelor. And one night, after I had known him a good, safe time like two or three years, he came out on the porch where I was sitting and asked me if I'd care to walk to the corner drug store for an ice-cream soda. He was so bold I nearly fell down the steps in my surprise. But not quite. And I accepted. But I was thinking more about poor *Jemima Marigold*, up in her hall room mending a shirt waist to wear to work the next day, than I was about the miracle of his asking me out to a party! He said, by and by, that I seemed preoccupied. He used language, you see—not just words.

Well, I had a great idea. I don't go in much for meddling with other folks' business, and, as for doing good, I despise it. I wouldn't be an uplifter if you gave me a diamond sunburst for it. But I just couldn't keep my hands off *Jemima Marigold's* affairs. And before we had walked back to the steps, I had told Mr. Beecher all that I knew about her and a good deal that I didn't, and I had actually gotten him to say that he "would undertake to repair a few deficiencies in her experience," if it would please me.

"It will please you, Miss Garven?" he asked, in quite a serious way.

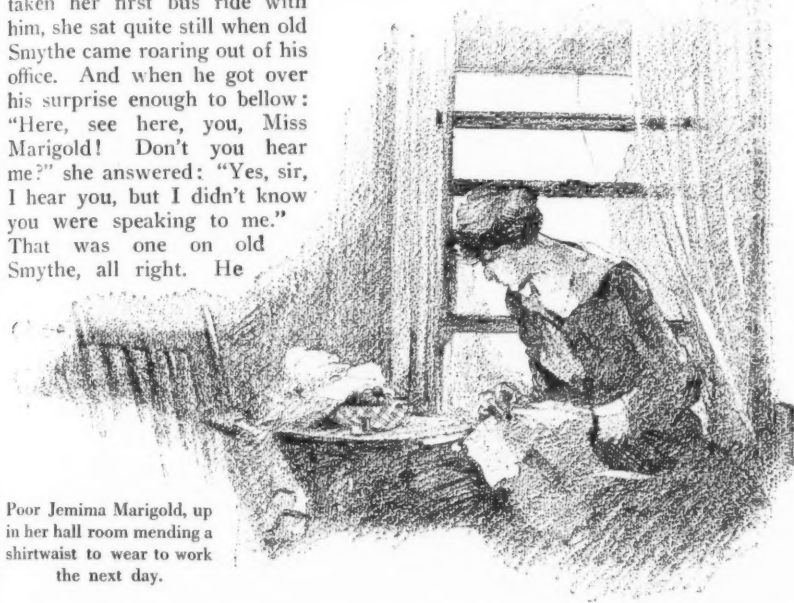
And I said to him that it would please me so much that I'd take a soda with him for every one he gave *Jemima*, and that I'd ride on the bus with him for every time he took her, and that I'd

do Coney Island with him once for every time he took *Jemima*.

Well, he went to it like a little man, I will say that for him—to that work of repairing certain deficiencies in her experience. He had his work cut out for him, too. *Jemima* was as shy as a bird at first. But—and this was what gave me the determination to go on with it—the very day after she had taken her first bus ride with him, she sat quite still when old *Smythe* came roaring out of his office. And when he got over his surprise enough to bellow: "Here, see here, you, Miss Marigold! Don't you hear me?" she answered: "Yes, sir, I hear you, but I didn't know you were speaking to me." That was one on old *Smythe*, all right. He

talk to children, you know. He was sort of nice, and I took a good deal of credit to myself for starting him in on Miss Marigold.

Well, it went along like that for three months. Every time she went out in the evening with Mr. Beecher, she seemed more like a human



Poor *Jemima Marigold*, up in her hall room mending a shirtwaist to wear to work the next day.

never bothered to call out the name of the girl he was addressing! I could have hugged *Jemima* on the spot.

When I told *Reginald*—*Reginald Beecher* was his name—about it that evening, he was heartened to keep on. He said to me that no one could help liking the shy little woman and feeling sorry for her, and that he was mighty glad of the chance I had given him to see something of her; but it was my turn to-night to ride on the bus. Which I did, and found out that he used language partly in joke—the way people

being the next day. She began to frizzle her hair. It was a sort of gray-mouse color. I was half a mind to let her do it, but I really wasn't mean enough. I told her that that style had gone out in the eighties, except in royal families, and I showed her how to wave it. The office sat up and took notice the next day, I can tell you! And old *Smythe*, who had actually softened his roar and seldom forgot to call her by name since she had given him the jolt of his life that day—I distinctly saw him look at those waves!

Then I sort of had Reginald rush things. For one thing, I was getting to like my duplicate treats. So did he, he said. But, though he claimed to be properly glad when I reported from the office that she was so much more of a real person that she had been, still, he said there might be dangers in pushing my experiment too far. He had told me what my experiment was, you see. He said I was trying to arouse in Miss Marigold a sense of business importance by arousing in her a sense of womanly importance. I suppose that was right. It certainly worked that way. But he balked at carrying the thing to what he called its logical conclusion—that is, proposing to her.

"Why," he said to me, "she's ten years older than I am. How old did you think I was? I'm only thirty-seven."

"Well, that's no infant in a perambulator," I said. "She'd be all right for you—only she won't marry you. She wouldn't dream of such a thing. Only—if she had a bona-fide offer—or even if you just go as far as to be carried away by your feelings to the point of kissing her——"

"Cherry, I don't like the familiarity with which you allude to these things," he interrupted me. But I went on:

"I bet you it would buck her up enough so that she'd ask for a raise in salary."

"You remember," he told me, "that you were to let me duplicate with you each of the—eh——"

"Oh, piffle!" I said. But I felt hot to the roots of my hair. "Only I can't bear to see a thing half finished. Let's make a whole job of it."

"But if she says yes——" he moaned.

"Oh, then I'll elope with you myself," I said, "and we'll leave her with a broken heart. I've known lots of girls to build up fine careers for themselves out of broken hearts. She'd like one; she's so romantic."

"You promise?" he said sort of insistent. And I said: "Haven't I just told you that I believe in finishing a job if you undertake it?"

Well, he finished it. Not all at once. He did kiss her first—off by the ear. I know. That ended it for that night. But, truly, she went to Smythe—he's the office manager for the firm—the very next day and told him that she had worked for twelve years without a raise, and that she had to have one. They had quite a long talk, and she told me that night that we had always misjudged Smythe! He had promised to look into her case.

I speeded Reginald up. He proposed to her two days later. He must have made an awful mess of it—for a man of language—if I am to judge by the duplicate performance! However, he escaped. She was so sorry for him she didn't know what to do, and she reproached herself bitterly for having raised false hopes in his heart, and she would always be his true friend and his sister; but the truth was that she was already engaged to marry Smythe—had pulled it off just that day! Of course she didn't say anything vulgar like that!

She's awfully funny, Mrs. Smythe is, about coming to see me. She knows that Reginald married me in a fit of pique or despair; or, at best, that his heart was caught on the rebound. And she fears to bring sorrow into my life, I suppose.

Never mind. She's a ducky thing, as self-important as a strutting pigeon. And I've proved my theory—the one that Reg says I had, though I didn't know it—about the value of womanly success as a business asset.

Sometimes I shudder a little, though, to think of what a hole we might all have got into if Smythe hadn't taken the fatal step precisely when he did!

Whenever I think of that, I swear off again from good works.

FALSE COLORS

by
Edwina Levin

Author of "He Never Lied to His Wife,"
"Happiness à la Mode," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF



A story of the stage, tense and thrilling in its situations, told by a girl who has been an actress herself.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Pauline Stevens, a young actress out of a job and at the end of her resources, hears accidentally that the great Norwegian star, Laura Figlan, whose London success is to open shortly in New York, has cabled her producer, Gossman, that she has just married and will not appear in the American production. Gossman is wild, as he has been rehearsing the American cast for weeks, and has spent a fortune in advertising. Pauline, who has always known of her striking resemblance to Miss Figlan, and has modeled her acting upon that of the star, goes to Gossman with the idea that he may take her as a substitute in the part. To her amazement, she is welcomed as the real Laura. Recognizing her chance, she allows the deception to stand, intending to confess her true identity after she has made good in Laura's part. On the opening night of the play, a friend of Laura Figlan's, Doris Clayton, unexpectedly arrives at the theater. She discovers the deception at once, but for her own purposes does not announce it. Pauline, keyed to a high emotional pitch by this new danger, acts superbly, and the critics declare that the great Figlan has surpassed herself. Pauline, however, can not yet bring herself to confess. She has fallen desperately in love with an American army officer, Lieutenant Lewis, and fears the effect of the disclosure upon him. When he suddenly leaves town without a word, she concludes that he has learned the truth and left her in disgust. As she cannot find it in her conscience to open mail addressed to Miss Figlan, she does not know whether he has written or not. Shortly afterward, Doris Clayton turns up again with a man who claims to be Laura Figlan's first husband. This Dan Frawley tells Pauline that her (Laura's) divorce from him was illegal and that in marrying again she has committed bigamy, and he threatens to turn her over to the law unless she will pay him heavy blackmail. Pauline retorts that he knows as well as she does that she is not the real Laura and that she can escape the penitentiary at any time by confessing the fact. But Frawley contends that no one will believe her and that the real Laura can not be called as a witness because she must be interned in Germany, or she would have heard before this of Pauline's success under her name and have come over to put a stop to it.

CHAPTER XV.

CELESTE, you may go to bed," said Pauline when she reached her hotel. "I will not need you." She wanted to be alone to think out this new problem before her.

Pacing about the luxurious boudoir, Pauline looked deep into the pit she had dugged. In taking to herself the

name and fame of Laura Figlan, she had also taken upon herself the woman's sins. Bigamy! Perhaps that was why the star had thrown up her contract at the last minute! Perhaps she had not dared come back to the United States!

Crossing to the lock box that contained all Laura Figlan's mail, she

The story began in the May number.

opened it and took out a postal from George McMillan, received that day. The boy was at home on sick leave. She studied the postal for some time; then put on her hat and went out to find a telegraph office.

The following morning, she went to a well-known lawyer.

"My stage name is Laura Figlan," she said briefly. "I want you to have the marriage records searched here and in Buffalo and let me know exactly what they show regarding Fay McMillan or Laura Figlan."

The lawyer looked at her in surprise.

"Is there anything more you want to tell us, Miss Figlan?" he asked quietly.

"Not until I know what is shown by those records," she replied. "How much do I owe you as a retainer?"

"A hundred dollars."

She silently handed him a hundred-dollar bill and rose to go.

"Will you hurry the matter?"

"I'll long-distance Buffalo to-day and send my clerk over at once to look up the records here," he replied.

"Thank you." She went out with little hope, however. Those two devils knew what they were doing.

On her return from a drive three days later, Pauline found a slim, blond boy in khaki waiting in the lobby of her hotel. He fairly leaped for her as she entered.

"Hello, sis!" he cried. "I caught the next train after I got the money." Squeezing her with brotherly roughness, he also gave her a hearty, explosive kiss. "Gee, it was good of you to send for me! I was so afraid I wouldn't get to see you. I heard that we would go direct to the ship from the troop train." He pushed her away, holding her at arm's length. "Aren't you ever going to get old? I'll swear you're younger than you were five years ago!"

Pauline laughed and led the way to the elevator. On the night of her talk

with Dan Frawley, feeling that the least of the evils that could befall her was exposure as a usurper of the star's place, she had wired a hundred dollars to George McMillan, telling him to come to New York and spend his furlough with her. She had figured that he could not fail to know that she, Pauline, was not his sister.

That he would be ten to fifteen years younger than Laura, and might not recognize the differences that were bound to exist, Pauline had not figured on, nor that the boy had not seen his sister in five years.

"Gee, but you've done yourself proud!" he said, as they entered her apartment.

Then he spoke of home and the home folk, demanding little of her in the way of conversation.

"Say, sis," he broke off suddenly, "come on—feed me. I'm starved."

Laughingly they went downstairs to the big, cool dining room.

"Some swell joint," remarked the boy, as they passed a fountain heaped with ferns and palms in the center of the room. An orchestra played softly from a fern-banked balcony. "Gee!" he sighed, looking about as they sat down. "And to think you were born in a four-room shack and went barefooted to school because pa was too poor to buy shoes!" His eyes rested on her in a sort of awe.

Pauline smiled noncommittally. The waiter came to take their order.

"Sis," said the boy, when they were alone again, "I want to tell you—" He hesitated.

"Yes, George?" Pauline encouraged.

"I don't blame you," he broke out quickly, as if he must say it before he lost courage. "I don't blame you for anything you've done. You never had half a chance. Our home was a hell on earth, with the old man drunk half the time. And I think you're wonderful to have come up the way you have,

no matter what you had to do to bring it about, and I never forget all I owe you. I'd be an ignoramus if you hadn't sent me to school and—and—" His lip quivered. He blinked angrily.

"You're a dear boy," said Pauline, tears coming into her own eyes.

So Laura Figlan had had her fight, too—a fight from out of the depths, and she had her fine points, like everybody on earth. This boy represented the big, human side of her. The worshipful look in his eyes told Pauline how much the star had done for him. She had not had a fair chance herself, either. A drunken inheritance!

"Miss Figlan, Miss Figlan!" a voice called.

Pauline rose as a bell boy came toward her saying:

"Phone for Miss Figlan."

"Excuse me, George," she murmured.

"This is Dan Frawley," said a voice on the phone.

"Yes," Pauline replied.

"We—that is, I have decided that you've got to come across to-day," the man said thickly. He was clearly intoxicated. "I'm sick of waiting around on your high and mighty airs, you drunkard's brat, with bigamy and murder to your credit! Yes, murder! Maybe you didn't stick the knife into Ben Lawson's heart, but you were the cause of it, and while the law couldn't touch you for that—"

Pauline hung up the receiver and staggered out of the phone booth. She went back into the dining room, white and shaking.

"Sis!" cried the boy, rising as she reached their table. "What's the matter?" He helped her into her seat.

"That was Dan Frawley," she said, "on the phone."

"Dan Frawley!" exclaimed the boy. "What does he want of you?"

"Money."

"Money. What for?" asked the boy indignantly.

Pauline's heart pounded sickeningly.

"He says I am to blame for— You know."

"He's a liar!" cried the boy, so violently that several people at near-by tables looked up in astonishment. He saw, and lowered his voice. "Whatever you may have done since then, you loved Ben Lawson and were true to him, and, by God, I'll kill anybody that says different!"

Pauline put her hand to her head and, resting her elbow on the table, turned her face from the others in the big dining room. She wanted to think clearly, without the interruptions of sight. The boy fidgeted and looked uneasily about. He thought she was going to cry, and he had a man's horror of being conspicuous.

"Let's go upstairs," he said.

"No, finish your dinner," she replied, forcing a smile. "I'm all right now."

He watched her silently for a moment; then spoke viciously:

"If that hound dares to come near you asking for money after what he did—I— Why, I'll shoot him down like a dog!"

Lunch over, Pauline took George for a long drive, during which, by adroitly put suggestions, she got the whole tragic story of Fay McMillan's first marriage. After which, she drove to her bank in Jersey City and withdrew four thousand, five hundred dollars, which was the entire sum of her savings. The five hundred she stuffed into George's breast pocket. He colored, protested, then kissed her.

"Little mother!" he whispered in her ear, and they rode for a long time in silence.

A full report from her lawyer was waiting for her at the hotel. On finding mention of the Chicago divorce, they had followed that up, getting a history of the Illinois records, also.

When Dan Frawley called at the the-

ater that evening, Pauline sent Céleste out on an errand and asked him into her dressing room.

"Be seated, please," she said, an enigmatical smile curving her lips.

"Have you got that money?" he asked, ignoring her invitation.

The small room reeked with the odor of whisky, and there was an evil gleam in his eyes. Pauline saw that he was in just the right humor to spoil even his own chances of gain if he were crossed.

"Yes, I have it," she said, sitting beside her make-up shelf.

"Well, what's the holdup?" he snapped. "I'm in no humor to hold a pink tea with you."

"My brother George is here," she smiled gently.

"Your brother George!" he sneered. He sat down as if enjoying the game.

"Yes, I sent for him to identify his sister." Pauline smiled. "Several things are more desirable than prison, you know."

"You weren't such a fool," he said sarcastically, "for it was not a question of prison, but of money."

"More money than I had or could get," she returned, speaking rapidly now. "In other words, Dan Frawley, you and your very clever accomplice bungled when you drove me to the wall. That is always an unwise thing to do when you don't hold all the cards."

The man laughed derisively.

"So you sent for George to expose your fraud and save you from prison for bigamy?" he sneered. "Well, did he?"

"No, he merely recognized me as his sister."

"Ha!"

"And he would testify in any court that I am his sister," went on Pauline, as if wishing to convince him.

"Well, what next?" said the man impatiently.

"Nothing much, only that I had the

Buffalo records searched for my marriage to Dan Frawley."

"Well?"

Again Pauline leaned forward. One clenched hand rested on her make-up shelf, and she spoke in a low, tense voice:

"Well, don't you think *one* prison term is enough for you?"

"What do you mean?" He got up quickly.

"I mean that Dan Frawley went to Joliet prison for killing Fay McMillan's husband in 1901, and has been there these past sixteen years, and could not have married Ben Lawson's widow even if she had not hated him so fiercely that she drew the knife out of her husband's breast and tried to stab Frawley with it, and received a severe flesh wound herself before a man of her company knocked Frawley down! I mean that Laura Figlan's second marriage was entirely legal; that her third, though annulled because of a Chicago divorce, was in no sense bigamy; that you and Doris Clayton are a pair of blackmailers without a leg to stand on, and I can send you to prison at my pleasure."

"You devil!" the man hissed. "But you daren't press the charge for fear of Fay McMillan!"

"Daren't I? You yourself informed me that Laura Figlan, or Fay McMillan, was in Germany, and not likely to take any part in this little game until after the war. My brother George will be here shortly, and he thinks badly of you, Dan Frawley. I myself am inclined to let you go, if you go at once."

The man looked at her in sheer amazement, not unmixed with admiration.

"I told Doris," he said after a moment, "that a woman who had the brains and the nerve to do what you've done was too smart to be caught by a couple of boobs like us."

"Your story will make good press stuff for me if your friend cares to tell it." Pauline smiled now. "Ex-convict says famous star is not herself. Soldier brother visiting her tries to kill him."

A look of unutterable hatred came into the man's eyes, but still she smiled in that cool, tantalizing way.

"One prison term not enough, eh?" she questioned, understanding his look. "Now get out before I have you put out!" Her tone changed to sharp command.

With an oath he went, swaggering as does an actor who has failed to make good in a part. Knowing, through Doris, that Pauline was not Laura, with her help he had concocted this

scheme counting on Pauline's ignorance, of the facts and eagerness to keep the whole thing quiet. Neither of them had dreamed that she would dare any sort of an investigation.

Pauline sighed with great relief as the stage door banged after him. How curious that every single thing that had loomed so large in her path had



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been blown away as by a breath! Now the last obstacle was removed, and she had prospects of a long, uninterrupted run in which to establish her work thoroughly and acquire a nice bank account with which to go abroad in case Broadway were inclined to be unfriendly when the truth came out. How good was her freedom from those two blackmailers! What a horror is the thought of prison! No wonder poor old Miss Nestor had aged so horribly! Her only and worshiped child!

Picking up her hand bag, Pauline went out on the stage and climbed the steps to Miss Nestor's room. The old woman, always in the theater early, sat with her head bowed on her make-up shelf. Her door was slightly ajar, and Pauline could see the hopeless droop of her figure.

"Here, Miss Nestor," Pauline said, pushing the door open without knocking, "is something I want you to use. I'll get the balance for you to-morrow."

She laid a small package on the make-up shelf and went hurriedly back downstairs. Miss Nestor followed her in a few minutes.

"I can't take it," she said briefly, as she came for the first time into Pauline's dressing room.

"You can for your boy's sake."

The old woman gulped.

"I can't even for his sake. It's a bribe."

"It is not," replied Pauline. "Dan Frawley has just left here. He asked me for five thousand dollars and a hundred and fifty a week to keep certain secrets which he said he possessed regarding me. His story would have made excellent press stuff, but I didn't need it badly enough to pay for it—so he has gone."

Miss Nestor looked at Pauline quizzically.

"You have brains and nerve, and you can act. I wonder why you did such a fool thing."

"I don't understand you, really," smiled Pauline, "but if you have any stories you would like to spread about me, please don't hesitate, because press stuff is never amiss. Only I fear Mr. Gossman and the dear public would think trouble or work had turned your mind. My brother George is here. I sent for him when Dan Frawley appeared. George recollects you, though he was only a little boy when——"

"By cracky, but you are a cool one!" burst out Miss Nestor. "I'm going to take this money because—well, because—I'm a mother. I lied to myself and to you when I said I couldn't be bribed. They say everybody has a price. John is mine."

"But this isn't bribe money," protested Pauline. "If it had been, Dan Frawley and Doris Clayton would have it instead of you."

"Then why did you give it to me?"

"Because I once had a vision of prison doors for myself, and I know how they look."

"Humph!" grunted Miss Nestor. She thought a moment; then said, "Such things do give us a bigger understanding. Well, I'll tell Henry to pay you two hundred dollars out of my envelope every week."

"Can you afford——"

"I can." She stood looking at Pauline hesitatingly, and opened her mouth to speak, but the words died unuttered. She thrust out her hand abruptly; then went away without a word.

"Good-by, my brave soldier brother," said Pauline to the boy who bade her good-by at Grand Central.

"Good-by, sis," he said, struggling to keep back the boyish tears. "I got a hunch we'll be going over pretty soon and—if I don't come back—I want you to know that I'm proud of you as—hell."

"And I'm proud of you, big brother," said Pauline; "proud as—hell, too."

They both laughed heartily. As he stooped to kiss her, he whispered:

"And I'm proudest because you have quit——"

"And I'm proudest of you because you never touched it," she said.

"All aboard!" called the conductor, and the young soldier stepped on the train. Pauline stood watching and waving to him as he slowly vanished into the distance—the only brother she had ever known.

There were hot tears in her eyes as she turned away. Two soldiers would carry her heart Over There. And whether they came back or not, she would never see either of them again. And in all the great, wide world, they were the only two beings whom she deeply loved.

She was thinking of these two men that evening, as she changed to her street clothes, when there came a knock on her dressing-room door.

Céleste opened it at a nod from her. She rose quickly at sight of the man who stood there, his face serious, his gray eyes questioning.

"Lieutenant Lewis!" she gasped. A faintness spread over her. It was all she could do to stand. He did not speak—just stood studying her. "I—I did not expect—— I'm glad to see you."

She held out her hand. He took it in both his own and drew her nearer to him, the while he stared deep down into her great, passionate eyes. They fell before his intense gaze, and the quick color flamed in her face. He gave a little sigh, as if satisfied with what he found there.

"Will you have supper with me out at the Heights?" he asked.

"Yes," she whispered. "I'm ready now. My hat, Céleste." She drew her hand away from him.

They did not speak again until he had threaded his big car out of the downtown traffic and turned north on the Drive.

"Now tell me why you didn't answer my letters," he said.

"I didn't—know you wrote," she replied.

He pondered this for a few minutes.

"I wrote you three letters," he said presently—"one right after I left, explaining that I had been called away on government business and had not wanted to waken you that morning, as you had been up all night. But I left a message with the telephone operator for you."

"She never delivered it," said Pauline.

"Then I wrote two other letters," he went on. "You didn't answer them, and I quit. But as it isn't my nature to quit until I know there's nothing else to do, I've come back to find out if you were merely amusing yourself when you led me to believe——"

"I—I've been too—wretched to live since you went away—like that," Pauline half sobbed.

He turned the car into the shade of one of the convenient trees along the Drive and stopped; then, without a word, he put his left arm around her, while with his right hand he lifted her chin upward and looked down at the soft mouth so clearly visible in the shadow. For a moment he seemed to dally with the temptation, holding off as if to test his strength; then suddenly his right arm was flung about her, his lips were on hers.

"God how I love you!" he said after a long while.

"And I love you—like that," she whispered, both her arms stealing up around his neck.

"Let's not go to the Heights," he said, after another long while.

"No. Let's not."

"Dotty is waiting for us."

"Then we ought to——"

"No, let him wait. He won't miss us. He's persuaded Miss Dewey to have supper with him."

They both laughed joyously.

"What a funny little thing she is!" said Pauline. "And utterly delicious."

"Dotty is absolutely mad about her," Lewis continued. "Poor old chap, I'm sorry."

"Why?" She nestled closer to him.

"Well, poor old Dotty has had one experience. Woman was such a liar that she would use a lie when the truth would have served better. As might be expected of such a woman, she was utterly false to him."

"Do you think that follows?" asked Pauline weakly.

"Of course. If I had a wife and I ever caught her in a deliberate lie, I would never have confidence in her again in any way."

"But don't you think a lie may be justifiable sometimes?" almost pleaded Pauline.

"For instance?" he questioned, looking at her intently, at the same time tightening his arms around her.

"Well, for instance—a mother—to save her child from disgrace, perhaps."

"Perhaps in that case——"

"Or it may be that one lies to save himself——"

"From some other immoral act? Are we justified in trying to justify immorality with further immorality? I think not. In fact, I believe that deception is the basis of all marital unhappiness. How many unfaithful wives or husbands would there be if there were no cloak of lies under which to hide? And one lie inevitably brings a thousand more in its train."

Pauline could not but admit that this was true.

"And so, little wife-to-be," Lewis went on, "you see what an ogre I am. My wife must be guilty of nothing that requires a lie to cover it. If I caught her in one, I could never trust her again in any way. Now will you take me?"

And because she loved him so des-

perately, Pauline, with her arms around his neck, whispered:

"I'll take you! I must! I should die if I didn't!"

He apparently found nothing unusual in her vehement answer.

That night Pauline dreamed, however, of lies and lies and lies, all of which were in the form of hideous beasts. They surrounded her and hedged her off from Lewis, who reached out his arms to her from the other side of the loathsome circle.

She waked, tired, worn out, when Célèste brought her breakfast tray.

Pauline had just taken a sip of coffee when the phone rang, and Célèste told her that Lieutenant Lewis wanted to speak with her. She ran to the phone.

"Dearest, have you had breakfast?" he asked eagerly.

"Just started," she replied thrillingly.

"Well, stop," he commanded, "and come down and have it with me."

"I'm not dressed," she protested.

"I'll wait. I'll come over to your hotel and wait in the lobby for you. After breakfast I'll take you to the theater, and when you are through rehearsal, if you'd like to see the war gardens up at Fort George——"

"I'd love to," she said. She would have loved anything that meant being with him. "I'll dress in a hurry."

Oh, how big and fine and wonderful he was! She glowed at the thought while she dressed in feverish haste. How, though, was she ever to confess to him her colossal lie?

"I can't! I can't!" she thought fiercely. "I never can! I'd lose him if I did, and I'd rather die than do that! I'll wait. I'll tell him it's not my real name, of course, but—oh, I can't admit that awful thing to him! Maybe, after I'm his wife, he'd forgive me. Men forgive their wives things that they won't forgive their sweethearts."

But, for all her brave determination, Pauline was deeply uneasy. She had a feeling that Doris Clayton had not yet finished with her.

Neither of the lovers bothered about what they ate at that first breakfast together. And over and over Pauline told herself that she'd rather die than see doubt take the place of the adoring look on his fine face.

He went with her to the theater and sat in a box watching, not the rehearsal, as she knew, but her. She was, however, nervous and uneasy.

A curious foreboding gripped her. Perhaps it was Lewis' talk about lies and her bad night. Or was it a premonition? She had that feeling of impending disaster that sometimes settles on the heart like a great weight without any reasonable cause or excuse. She looked out at Lewis and sighed heavily. He smiled back at her.

"Why the great sigh?" asked Dotson, who was standing near her.

They were making a slight change in the last act. Gossman sat in the box with Lewis.

"Ever have a presentiment?" she whispered.

"Lots of times," he laughed. "A little soda or mint will stop it."

The rehearsal proceeded smoothly. Pauline was making her last entrance when suddenly there was a loud commotion at the stage door.



As he stooped to kiss her, he whispered: "And I'm proudest because you have quit—"

"I tell you you can't come in here," the door man's voice was saying. "They's a rehearsal goin' on. You got to get a order from the front."

"Order be damned!" snapped a feminine voice that made Pauline's heart quail. "I came here to see Mr. Gossman. They told me at the office he was here and—"

A crash, and the old door man came

reeling backward and sprawled full length on the stage. Every eye was on the door. Gossman and Lewis jumped up together.

Dotson started forward just as a heavily veiled woman fairly hurled herself onto the stage.

"Where is Henry Gossman?" snapped the woman. "You are not——"

"I am his general manager," said Dotson. "Who are you?"

"I"—she flung back her veil—"am Laura Figlan!"

CHAPTER XVI.

The sudden dropping of a bomb in their midst could not have produced a more paralyzing effect on the little group of people gathered on that dim, dingy stage, with its piles of scenery and furniture stacked against bare brick walls.

For one breathless moment, not a sound broke the silence that followed that startling statement: "I am Laura Figlan."

Pauline sank weakly on a near-by chair. It had come—the hour she had dreaded and hoped might be long delayed. It had come on the very heels of her great happiness. And she did not even have money enough in the bank to pay her bill at the hotel. She had given her all to save Miss Nestor's boy from his sins. Now *her* sins had fallen due and there was nobody to help her pay the bill.

Vaguely she saw Lewis and Gossman transfixed in their box. Dotson stared speechlessly at the tall, emaciated woman, with great bags under her big, midnight eyes, frowns blond hair, pale, sunken cheeks, and bedraggled gown—the once radiant woman who had charmed Europe and America. Miss Nestor, who had been sitting, got up stiffly. The character men and juvenile, out of the scene at the moment, closed in.

Laura Figlan, evidently realizing the

effect she had produced, did not add to her astounding announcement, but waited for some one to speak. Suddenly a curious sound broke the tension. It came from Miss Dewey, and was most unexpected from a person who studied Lombroso. It was a positive and decided giggle. And the outrageous sound seemed infectious. Men don't giggle, but a distinct snicker came from the gossiping part of the company. Then everybody laughed. Pauline looked up in surprise. As she did so, she caught Dotson's eye—and he winked.

Laura Figlan heard the laugh. She knew that it related to her appearance, and it goaded her to madness. Sweeping the little group with eyes that blazed, she caught sight of Gossman in the box.

"Ah!" she screamed. "There you are, you dirty thief! You dog! You damned swindler!"

"The woman's crazy," said Gossman in a low tone to Dotson.

And, looking at the wreck of what had once been the beautiful star, it seemed indeed that this was perhaps some poor mad actress who believed herself the great Norwegian. The resemblance that could still be seen would account for her delusion.

"You're crazy yourself!" she cried. "Though why I'm not, I don't know! That German dog told me he was a count. He was just a common spy! He was shot, and I was interned. I escaped. God, what I've been through! And I didn't even get press stuff out of all that hell!" Her voice rose almost to a shriek.

That the government had not given her big advertising for her suffering, had even kept her imprisonment a secret, furnished her special cause for grievance. It was in fact more humiliating than everything else she had endured.

"They haven't even taken notice of

my escape!" she raged, seeming to see no good fortune for herself in this oversight that had made her escape less difficult. "I couldn't ask help of anybody I knew for fear of being arrested," she went on. "I came over steerage, and here, where I expected to get help, I find that my name has been stolen, my reputation misused! But, by God, I'll make you pay, you thieves!"

"Yes, of course you will," said Dotson, advancing toward her. "But you mustn't interrupt us at rehearsals. Go outside, and we'll talk about it after a while."

He took hold of her arm, and his voice had the soothing, pacifying tone one uses to an insane person or to one under the influence of drugs. She jerked her arm away with a scream of rage.

"You fool! What do you mean by telling me to get out?"

"Now come on. There's a good woman." Again he took hold of her arm, and again she wrenched herself free from him.

A sudden realization of what they all thought came to her, and dimly she understood. The unaccustomed hardships of prison and the soul-scarifying horrors and deprivations of the fugitive had eaten up her beauty and made an old woman of her all at once. It was no wonder that the company had laughed, and that Gossman and Dotson thought she was crazy, at best; perhaps, drug crazed. In the pause, Gossman came up on the stage. Now he and Dotson began trying to get her toward the door. Her stunned apathy fell away. She fought like a maniac, calling them fools and thieves, swearing and threatening.

"You dolts, do you think you can cheat me completely out of my name?" she screeched. "Why, I can prove who I am inside of two hours! There are dozens of— Ah!" she shrieked. "Alice Nestor!"

Both men paused. Pauline sat limp—waiting. She had not moved once throughout this astonishing scene.

"Alice Nestor!" Miss Figlan cried again. "She has worked with me!"

Gossman turned to Miss Nestor.

"Alice, do you know this woman?"

"Yes," replied the old woman. "I know her well."

"Then who is she?" he asked. Pauline's very soul cringed in waiting for the reply. It seemed that it would never come. Why didn't Miss Nestor speak? Surely there could be no sense in taking so long about it.

"Her name is——" Miss Nestor paused. She cleared her throat and began again, this time with a grim note in her voice, "Her name is Fay McMillan."

"That was my real name," cried Miss Figlan. "I took the name of Laura Figlan for stage purposes."

"When did you take it? Just now?" smiled Gossman, a little sarcastically. He had not taken kindly to her abuse, even though he was half inclined to believe her demented. He was not accustomed to such treatment.

"No, years ago. I——"

"Alice, what was this woman's stage name when you worked with her years ago?" cut in Gossman impatiently.

"Fay McMillan," Miss Nestor answered firmly.

"Alice Nestor, you old devil!" cried Miss Figlan. "You are in on this scheme to rob and ruin me! You know I changed my name to Laura Figlan right after——"

"Come on, boys," Gossman called to the other men. "Help Dotty put the lady out. We haven't time to listen to the ravings of a dope fiend."

And so Laura Figlan, the great artist of two continents, was forcibly ejected from the theater where she could once have reigned queen, while Pauline Stevens, sick beyond words, looked on.

"Poor devil!" said Gossman, shaking

his head sadly. "Come on, let's get the rehearsal over."

Pauline stood up.

"Mr. Gossman," she said faintly, "I can't finish the rehearsal. I'm sick."

She swayed giddily. Miss Nestor caught her. Everybody rushed up, trying to do something and doing nothing. Lewis carried her out to his car.

No doubt of the star's ability to prove her identity came to Pauline. The morning papers would emblazon the wretched story and bring all her beautiful world tumbling about her to crush and mangle her. Still, she had not the courage to come forward and confess. Whatever to-morrow brought, it was at least—to-morrow.

"Célèste, go get the morning papers," commanded Pauline, the minute she was awake the following morning. "Get all of them."

Célèste was gone for what seemed a century. On her return, Pauline scanned the papers and went feverishly through them, one, then another and another, scanning the headlines. War! War! Nothing else. Then she began to look more minutely. Finally, in one, she found what she sought. Her heart gave a sickening thud. "Woman Claims to be Star," said the caption. Then followed a brief account of a woman who had come to the office to denounce Miss Laura Figlan, playing at the Huron Theater, as an impostor, claiming that she was herself the Norwegian star. The item was handled humorously and in such a fashion as to suggest that a clever press-agent trick was suspected.

The whole story did not fill a quarter of a column. The other papers, not to be made fools of by press agents, had taken no notice of the matter.

Pauline rose at once and hurried over to the theater. Going back stage, she found the dressing-room list, then drove to a cheap rooming house in the West

Forties. Telling the chauffeur to wait, she went up the high stone steps and pulled the bell.

"Is Miss Nestor in?" she asked the slovenly woman who answered.

"Come in," replied the woman. "Last door on your left."

Miss Nestor did not seem surprised. She closed the door as Pauline came in.

"Did you feel that you had to lie for me because of——" the girl began at once.

"I didn't lie," the old woman retorted. "Sit down."

Pauline sat on a trunk.

"But you knew——"

"Of course I knew."

"Then why——"

"Recollect, when I asked you why you let me have that money to keep my boy out of prison, you said it was because you had once had a vision of prison doors?" Miss Nestor still stood.

"Yes."

"And I said that such things did give us a bigger understanding?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've got a bigger understanding, too, since I saw my own boy"—she swallowed before finishing—"steal. He took money. You took something different. To me it doesn't seem that the boy's crime was so bad—that is, I can see how he was—tempted—and how I was to blame. I can see all sorts of excuses—for him. How do I know what excuses you may have had? Though I can't see why a girl who can act as you can——"

"I couldn't tell managers about it," Pauline interrupted. "They wouldn't listen or even look at me. They won't give you a chance until you've shown what you can do. And how can you show if they won't give you the chance? How do actors ever get on Broadway? I don't know. Nobody knows."

Miss Nestor sat down on the bed and looked musingly at the girl before her.

"Yes," she said presently. "I see what you mean. And the chance came, and you took it."

Pauline nodded.

"But didn't you figure on the future?"

"The only thing I saw was the chance to show them."

"Humph! This business is worse than—war." She said the last word with a dry smile that made it seem as if she had used its impolite equivalent.

"And now what?" Pauline spoke helplessly.

"Well, I have a suspicion that that's going to be up to you," replied Miss Nestor.

"How do you mean?"

"Fay got my address from the box office," said the old woman grimly. "She has just left here. And it's astonishing to see how poor a thing is human greatness—especially in our branch of art, where we create no single work to withstand time and decay, but embody within ourselves our whole life work, which, however finely perfected, decays with us, then dies with us."

She paused thoughtfully, and Pauline waited for her to go on.

"Drink and dope, aided by sudden hardship, have destroyed the Laura Figlan that was. Her life work is finished, and nothing whatever is left. I'm the only person, perhaps, in New York City who knows her, and I wouldn't if I hadn't known you weren't she. From what she tells me, the agents laugh at her claims. Even Kenneth Holmes, who handled her American tour, wouldn't see her. He's seen you work, accepted you. Anybody who claims to be you is an impostor, and he wouldn't even talk with her. She's seen everybody who ought to know her. Same result. You see, she's got nothing to show but herself. She has no great book, no great painting, to point to—"

"If she had, could they not still

say she was an impostor?" Pauline put in.

"No, because she could go straight to work and paint another picture, write another book, that would establish her identity. As you said yourself, an actress can't show that she can act unless they give her a chance, and they want to be shown first. So there you are."

"But surely you don't mean that so great an actress as Laura Figlan could drop out entirely?"

"I mean that she not only could, but she has. She will never get a chance to show how she can act—*unless you give it to her*. You're as great an actress as Fay ever was, yet see what you had to do to get a chance. And you had looks. Poor Fay hasn't, any more."

They both fell into silence. Finally Pauline spoke, and there was a curious intensity in her voice:

"Miss Nestor, do you mean that it's all in my hands to say whether Laura Figlan shall come back or I go on in her place?"

"I may be wrong, but I believe that's the size of it," the old woman said.

"But you—surely you would tell?"

"Who would believe me if I did? Not even Henry Gossman. He'd say I was getting into my dotage, or that my trouble over John had addled my weak brain. Besides, why should I mix in it? I've got enough to do to clean up my own house." Her tone changed. "Fay would have seen John rot in jail before she'd have handed out the money to save him." And she added with her habitual grimness, "I just don't feel called on to make a fool of myself in a futile attempt to save her and destroy the girl who saved my boy. Call it selfish or what not. I guess we all look out for self first."

"Didn't she try to get you to—"

"Course. But I never knew her as Laura Figlan. She never notified me that she had changed her name."



"Where is Henry Gossman?" snapped the woman. "You are not—I"—she flung back her veil—"am Laura Figlan!"

"But you heard—you saw pictures of her over and over."

"That's what she said."

"Well?"

"I saw pictures of Laura Figlan, of course, and I heard that Fay was Laura Figlan. Then you came along, looking like the pictures and saying you were she. What right have I to doubt you? Fay always was a liar. She tried to

manhandle me when I told her that, but dope and booze don't leave a woman muscle enough for such stunts. I put her out."

"My God!" cried Pauline. "Put out—everywhere!"

Miss Nestor did not comment fur-

ther, and as the conversation seemed closed, Pauline rose. Then she paused.

"What about your boy?" she asked.

"I've got him in jail," the old woman said quietly.

"What?"

"It amounts to that. Henry said I had—well, he said that nothing but jail would ever make a man of John, so I went to his employer—Tom Peyson, a man I know well; sends out road shows; I got John's job with him—and I paid him the money with the distinct understanding that John was not to know a thing about it, and was to believe he has to work it out or Tom will slap him in jail. At his present salary, it will take him exactly four years to pay it out. He's to get just barely enough money to let him live in the worst possible dumps. He can't quit. He's used to the best; he'll have the worst sort of living and the cheapest clothes he can possibly get by skimping on his eats—"

"How can you do it, Miss Nestor?" Pauline asked.

"There's nothing a mother can't endure for her child. I've got to do it. Tom will turn his money over to me, and I'll add it to what I pay you—"

"Miss Nestor," Pauline interrupted pleadingly, "let me do that for your boy. I don't want it back."

Miss Nestor lifted her hand.

"I'm going to pay every dollar of it. And then, when that's done, I'm going to save my money and his to set him up in a little business after he's had his lesson and become a man."

Pauline held out her hand hesitatingly. Miss Nestor took it heartily.

"You deserve a better fate than the besmirched name of Laura Figlan. But it's up to you whether you go on with it or give it back to her."

"Tell me what to do, Miss Nestor," the girl pleaded piteously.

"I can't. Every tub sets on its own bottom. I compromised with my con-

science—saved my boy and jailed him, so to speak. You'll have to have your problem out with your own conscience, child. God help you! That's all I can say." She went to the door with Pauline and, to the girl's surprise, kissed her. "You have a conscience. It will tell you what to do. Only don't waste pity on Fay. She's been the cause of two suicides and would break up a home that stood between her and a motor ride if she wanted the ride bad enough. Being correspondent is a habit with her. She takes men away from their families for her vanity's sake. Her love for her brother George is the only human spot to her, though they say she really loved her first husband, Ben Lawson. But she's a devil if there ever was one."

CHAPTER XVII.

With a smile of satisfaction toward life in general, Gossman slit the envelopes of a stack of letters piled on his desk and began scanning them rather hurriedly until he came to one in a big, square envelope, the handwriting of which was bold and scrawled all over the page. At sight of the inclosure, the smile dropped from his face and he sat up stiffly. After reading the short letter over several times, he reached into a drawer on his right and took out a number of contracts. Selecting one, he minutely compared the signature of the letter with that of the contract. Finally he called Dotson on the phone.

"Come up here right away, Dot," he said. "It's important."

When Dotson came in, the producer handed him the letter and the contract.

"What do you make of that?" he asked.

The letter said:

Henry Gossman, have you ever seen this handwriting before? Suppose you compare it with the signature you have on a certain contract signed "Laura Figlan." I don't

know whether you're a knave or a fool, but whichever you are, you're going to have to explain the startling similarity of those hand-writings in court and pay not only for using my name, but for putting me out of the theater yesterday.

Laura Figlan.

Dotson looked up, a puzzled frown on his face.

"It's startling—but—of course it's forgery—and bluff."

"Of course," replied Gossman hesitatingly. "And if that's all the evidence she has to offer——"

"No reputable lawyer would consider her case, with no more evidence than that," said Dotson decidedly. "The whole thing is ridiculous."

"Still, if she'd said: 'I am Laura Figlan's mother,' I'd have believed her," mused Gossman, "even if the girl had denied it."

"Yes, they are as like as—mother and daughter," replied Dotson. "I wonder if it could be possible."

"A mother wouldn't be trying to ruin her daughter, even if they were not friendly," said Gossman.

"It may be press stuff on the fair Laura's own account," smiled Dotson. "By all past records, she wouldn't bother about whether you were hurt, so long as she got notoriety of whatever sort. She's got herself in the night court, been put out of hotels, figured in divorce scandals—everything, anything, to get publicity."

Gossman beamed.

"Of course that's it. You do have a bright idea now and then, old dear. Get out. I'm busy."

Dotson went out laughing, and Gossman threw Laura's letter into the wastebasket. That afternoon being *matinée*, however, he went over to the theater and stood in the wings watching the performance. Miss Nestor made an exit, and they talked together, the while Pauline's glorious contralto voice, her lilting English, came to them.

"She can act," said Gossman.

"She can," agreed Miss Nestor.

"Funny about that woman coming here yesterday and claiming to be her," he said ungrammatically.

"Very funny," replied Miss Nestor.

Gossman was silent a while, then:

"You said you used to work with her?"

"Yes."

"Know her well?"

"Yes."

"Always been nutty?" he asked.

"Always," she said.

After a few minutes, he went out.

Pauline was doing what she had never done before—letting a question hang over unsettled. It was her habit of mind to think a thing out clearly, then definitely decide what seemed best to do and do it. Now she could not, would not think. She simply waited. Something must surely develop. The play ran on, the papers continued to feature the great Norwegian, and the box-office receipts continued to climb. Three days—four passed, bringing no further sign from Laura Figlan. Miss Nestor had been right, undoubtedly, about the woman's inability to establish her identity. She had probably been *put out* wherever she had gone. How horrible! How incomprehensible!

Pauline's sense of justice told her that she ought to confess, yet to do so would be to destroy herself. And self-preservation is the first law of nature and its greatest urge.

She found out, through Miss Nestor, where the star was stopping, and by way of salving her conscience, sent her entire pay envelope to the woman by special messenger.

"That will give her money to take the matter into court," thought Pauline, with grim whimsicality.

That Miss Figlan was almost destitute, she knew. How such a condition was possible for a woman who had made so much money is another of the actor problems that are hard to explain,

because the most reckless extravagance can scarcely equal the earnings of so popular a star. Yet benefits for once great players are one of the frequent tragedies of the stage.

Such relief as it was to Pauline to send financial aid to Miss Figlan did not last long. Hers was not the sort of conscience to be bought off with money. Nor could she delude herself with the idea that her duty ended here. She knew that she was giving nothing but what was the woman's own, and that she was withholding much more.

Still, she would not stop to think it out. And she was with Lewis every possible minute. It was as if she were nearing death and clung to him piteously, lest each time might be their last together.

If he noticed her attitude, he made no comment. His tenderness toward her increased, but also there seemed to her a sadness, as if he, too, foresaw the end. They had all their meals together now.

"Dearest," he said to her one day when they were at lunch, "I'm going to leave you again."

Her heart seemed to stop.

"It's government business," he went on, "and I'm likely to be gone some time. When I get back, I hope to be called overseas. Will you go, too, say ahead of me? I want you where I can at least see you now and then. We would have to be married *after* we get over."

"I can't," she whispered, so low that he scarcely heard. "Oh, I wish I could!"

"Why can't you?"

"My contract."

Then all at once it came to her that it was not her contract that was keeping her from him, but Laura Figlan's contract. If she kept that contract, she could not go; if she gave it up, he would not let her go. In a blinding flash, she saw clearly the thing that she

had known since the day of Laura Figlan's return, but had refused to acknowledge—whatever happened, her man was lost to her. She could not marry him without telling him the truth, and he would not marry her if she did tell it.

A wild temptation came to her to decide this matter once and for all—to take this man and all that might be hers for the mere taking and keep silent. Laura Figlan had had her day of glory and luxury and love, and she had misused her privileges. Under forty, she was an old woman. It was doubtful if she could ever recover her lost ground, even were she, Pauline, to sacrifice herself. And she could always send the woman money, which might be better than leaving her to her fate. So the tempter urged.

"I suppose you must finish your contract, mustn't you?" Lewis asked after some time.

"Yes, I must," she said.

"Well"—his words came as with difficulty—"couldn't— isn't there—some way—out of it?"

She looked at him in surprise. It wasn't like him to want to break faith.

"That woman who came to the theater that day and said she was you—she looked rather like you, only old and worn out. Couldn't she take your place—sort of understudy, you know? With make-up and—"

"No, she couldn't—take my place," replied Pauline. "Let's not speak of that."

It was the first time that he had mentioned the woman and her astounding claim. He looked bitterly disappointed, and Pauline said:

"I'll think about it and let you know."

"Anyhow," he suggested hopefully, "you could come over when that damn' contract is finished, and then we—"

She laid her slim hand over his mouth.

"Sh-h-h! I'll write you about that, too." Her laugh was constrained.

"All right," he replied, brightening. "Well, let's have a nice, long drive after lunch, and dinner on the Heights."

"I have a better scheme," She smiled. "We'll have the drive, then dinner in my rooms. This is our last evening. Let's spend it alone together."

"Our last for a little while," he protested, "but one of many hundred."

She smiled wanly, for all at once the certain knowledge had come to her that she could never marry this fine, high-

principled man. As Laura Figlan, with her besmirched past, she was unfit to be his wife; as Pauline Stevens, with her tangle of lies and deceit, she was—as unfit. She wondered that he could be willing to marry her, for he must know what had been the life of the woman whose name she bore.

"I wonder if you know how much I love you?" he said presently, as the waiter brought the check.

"Yes, I believe I do," she replied. "In fact, I was sort of thinking of that."

"And what was the result of your thought?"

"The result was to wish that I were worthy of you."

"You are."

She did not dispute him, but followed out to his car.

Leaning against his arm, looking into his face instead of at the lovely hills all splashed with the vivid reds and yellows and browns of Indian summer, she let herself revel in the thrill of his nearness. His eyes turned again and again from the road to look down at her. She slipped her arm through his and drew it against her,

and they talked of every little detail of their meeting on the dark old stage; and of how he had loved her at once, only of course he hadn't realized it then; and how she had loved him and hadn't realized it either. And they discussed the wonder of all the other things that all the other lovers since the world began have believed were peculiar to themselves.

"Haven't you ever



"I had no idea of passing myself off as Miss Figlan. But, oh, don't you see—I can act? I knew it, but I'd never have had a chance to show it."

cared for any other girl as you do for me?" she asked, womanlike.

"Never," he asserted and, manlike, took it for granted that she had never cared for any other man.

She confirmed him in this egotistical premise by pulling his head down to whisper:

"I never cared for any other man at all."

Head bent toward her, he kept his eyes on the road, and said: "Didn't you?" in a tone that implied, "I knew it, but say it again."

She was disappointed, as every woman is disappointed when He doesn't echo her own words.

"Have you cared for some one else a little?" she pouted directly.

"In a way—yes," he answered truthfully, "but not in the way I do for you."

She was silent a long time after that. Perhaps a woman never acquires the ability to appreciate the exact truth from her man. But, for that matter, does a man enjoy hearing his woman admit that she has cared for another man at all? Finally they turned back to the hotel.

The little dinner in Pauline's rooms was perfect. She had ordered it before leaving. Célèste served and acted as chaperon.

Finally Lewis rose. It was time to say good-by. His train would leave during the performance.

"Don't forget, my darling," he said, taking her in his arms, "you are to write me about—"

"I won't forget," she replied huskily. And she clung to him until Célèste, who had discreetly withdrawn, had to come in and remind her that she must go to the theater.

"I can't let you go away!" Pauline cried. "Oh, I love you so! Will you remember that—if anything should happen to part us?"

"Nothing shall happen!" he said fiercely.

"Good-by, my love, good-by!" she sobbed.

"Good-by, sweetheart, for a little while." And he reluctantly opened his arms.

At the door, he turned back, and she ran to meet him.

Then he was gone. And Pauline knew, as he did not, that this had been the great good-by; for upon his return, another Laura Figlan would be here, and Pauline Stevens would have dropped out of life into—San Antonio. She did not know when the decision had been made—perhaps from the first, only she had delayed its execution—but she knew now that she must give back the name and place she had taken.

She went draggingly to the theater.

It was characteristic of her that, having made up her mind as to what she must do, she no longer played with false hopes, or moiled over whether or not she was right. She knew what she ought to do—had to do. That settled it. And the sooner, the better.

The play over, Pauline lingered in her dressing room, fixing now this, now that on her make-up shelf, pretending to primp, anything for a minute longer here where she had had so much happiness; where success had rained on her and yet had not reached her; where love had come and had gone from her again. When she could no longer find excuses for herself or the curious Célèste, she rose. At the door she turned back for one last look around the close little room, with its pretty cretonne covers, its long shelf on which shoes were ranged beside various make-up and ornaments, its wall hung with hundreds of dollars' worth of gowns covered with a sheet. It was the farewell look one gives to a loved face which is about to be shut away from sight forever.

"Good-by, little room!" her heart

cried. "You have witnessed my great triumph. You witness my great defeat."

Céleste followed her out wonderingly, locked the door, and called to the man who was waiting to turn out the lights.

"Well, but this is a pleasure!"

Gossman beamed at sight of his most highly paying star, and yet he was vaguely uneasy. Such an early-morning call must mean trouble. He placed a chair for her and sat down, rubbing his hands together and planning what he would say in case she had come to ask for a bigger percentage. He certainly wouldn't give it to her without a fight. He would not take it to law, of course. A contract with a star, if that star chooses to "lay down" on a part, is of no account. You can't even force him to play if he refuses, and of what use is a judgment?

Clearly there was something brewing. The girl looked as solemn as an owl; her face was pale and her hands fluttered. But her manager pretended to take no notice of these things, and began chatting about various productions in town.

She let him talk and talk. She did not know what about.

"I was telling my wife last night——" he was saying.

"Mr. Gossman," Pauline burst out at last, as if afraid that she might not be able to do it, "that woman who came into the theater last week when we were rehearsing was Laura Figlan." She spoke as if she had been running.

Gossman stared at her speechlessly. His smile froze, leaving for the moment a silly, meaningless grin on his big face.

"I can't go on with the lie any longer," Pauline rushed on. "I can't steal that woman's name, her place, her money. When she was away and didn't want them, it was another matter. But now she is here and has claimed what

is hers, and needs it, and I want to step out and let her have her own."

She talked rapidly as if she dared not stop.

"I never meant to take anything from her. I never dreamed I could. I just wanted a chance for myself. Mr. Dotson made the mistake. I had no idea of passing myself off as Miss Figlan. But, oh, don't you see—I can act? I knew it, but I'd never have had a chance to show it, and I thought the means were justifiable. I see now that wrongdoing is never justifiable. It forms its own jail and locks us in its iniquitous walls."

She got up and began pacing about. Gossman sank back limply in his big desk chair and stared at her as if he thought she had gone suddenly crazy.

"I thought, when once I had had my chance, it would be easy to step out," she went on. "But it wasn't. I had never had anything in all my life, and it was so wonderful—more money than I could spend, beautiful clothes, luxury, and adulation. I dallied with it. I wanted to enjoy it for a little while, and—things kept hedging me in. And then—she came!"

She stopped in front of Gossman, whose eyes had suddenly narrowed.

"I had no idea that I could hold her place then. I had no such intentions. But it had gone so far—and I felt so ashamed to step out without a word." She turned away again. "It seemed better to fight, although I must inevitably lose. I hate a person who does a thing, then runs!" She spoke passionately. "So I waited again, never dreaming but that my hours were numbered. I don't believe I've realized fully what has actually happened until these last two or three days. And so now I've come to tell you." She came and stood before him. "The show will go right on just the same. It's not likely that those who have seen me will come to see the play again. Great

as it is, it's not the sort of play one cares to see twice, and those who have not seen me will, without question, accept the real Miss Figlan."

She brushed her hair back with a gesture of weariness.

"You've been wonderful to me, and I wish you might have been my manager under other circumstances. But — Well, that's all."

She turned toward the door. Gossman got up and caught her hand.

"Sit down, Miss Figlan," he said. "I'm going to call a doctor. You're sick. Your hands are as cold as ice." He put his hand on her brow. "And your head is burning up." He forced her into a chair.

"I'm not sick!" she tried, and all at once burst into hysterical weeping. "I wish I were dead!" It was the first time she had broken down through all the terrible strain of her situation.

Gossman sat and studied her a minute. Then he spoke deliberately:

"Stop crying. I want to talk to you," he said. "You are Laura Figlan. Everybody in New York knows it. If, for the sake of argument, what you tell me were true, you couldn't expect me to believe it. The woman who came into my theater claiming to be Laura Figlan is a hag, a booze fighter. She may at one time have been a fine actress. To-day she's done. She can't prove her claims or she would already have started action against me, and it isn't up to me to give her a damage suit by admitting such claim. You are my star. You are Laura Figlan. You are known to every person who saw you five years ago. There are dozens who will swear to your identity, not the least of whom is that fine young brother of yours, who can't come back, but whose deposition I can get if necessary. In short, if this is press stuff——"

"You mean you don't believe me?" cried Pauline.

"I mean just that. Also, I mean that

if you make this absurd story public, I would save money by closing down the show and having you put in an insane asylum. It would be better than paying damages to a vicious woman who would take spite out on me because you are a finer actress and younger and lovelier than she is."

He said this last smilingly, but Pauline felt that he would indeed do just that—try to have her shut up as insane. And there would be plenty of evidence to back him up in such a contention. Denying one's own identity, trying to ruin oneself—surely that would be proof of insanity. She got up slowly, without speaking.

"Better go home, girlie, and have a good rest," he smiled, "and let me attend to the press stuff."

Still Pauline did not answer. She had to get out where she could think. One thing was clear—she could not right her wrong by confession. Gossman would protect himself at all costs. What he might believe in the matter was of no consequence. He knew his advantage; and if Laura Figlan was down and out, it was no fault of his.

"The whole thing is preposterous," he was saying as he went down to the street with her.

He put her in her car with all the courtesy he had ever shown her. She drove through Central Park for a good two hours, then turned back downtown and drew up in front of the Dewel Hotel, where lived Laura Figlan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Come in," said a deep contralto voice in response to Pauline's knock.

Seated by a window looking out into the court sat a woman who rose indignantly at sight of her visitor.

"How dare you come here?" she asked, with ill-suppressed hate in her low-pitched tones.

In her hand was a magazine on the back of which was a highly colored pic-

ture of Pauline as Laura Figlan. Papers containing other pictures of her were open on the floor or bed.

"I came to ask you to play the performance at the Huron Theater tonight," replied Pauline quietly. She had closed the door and stood with her back to it.

"As your understudy, I suppose," retorted the woman with intense scorn. She seemed holding in her temper only by a fierce effort of will.

"No, as yourself—as Laura Figlan." Pauline noted the exquisite gown worn by the woman, and knew that the money she had sent had been used in characteristic Figlan fashion.

"So you and your thieving manager have come to your senses, have you?" Miss Figlan said, bitingly sarcastic.

"I have come to my senses," replied Pauline wearily, "but I'm afraid Mr. Gossman doesn't see the matter as I do."

"May I inquire just what you mean?" Whatever rebuffs Laura Figlan had met, she had in no sense been humbled. She stood by the window like a disdainful queen.

"I went to him this morning," said Pauline in her direct way, "and told him the truth about myself, and he would not believe me."

"The truth?" Miss Figlan spoke haughtily. "I don't follow you. He knew all the time that you were an impostor. He invented you to get even with me. There was no other way that you could have happened. The damned scoundrel!"

"He did not invent me," broke in Pauline. "On the day that I heard you had broken your contract, knowing how much I looked like you, I went to Mr. Dotson's office to see if I couldn't persuade him to let me play the part. He saw me and instantly took me for you and—well, I was poor and unknown and couldn't get a chance any other way and——"

"So the temptation to steal another's place was too great for you," cut in Miss Figlan coldly.

Pauline nodded.

"You know this business as well as I do."

Into the woman's eyes there came a faint flash of some feeling other than intense hatred. But she replied:

"It's a nice story—cleverly got up. Go on please. You interest me."

"Mr. Gossman hadn't the faintest idea of—my position," Pauline went on, undisturbed by the woman's words, "until this morning. I told him everything."

"That was nice of you!" scoffed Miss Figlan. "And he?"

"He said I was sick—delirious. He wouldn't listen to me. He said I was Laura Figlan. All New York knew it—dozens would swear to it. He said that I was his star, and that if I came out with that story, he would have me locked up as insane."

"The dirty bound!" cried Miss Figlan, the tide of her fury bursting forth. "He knew you were telling the truth, but he knew, too, that if you came out with it, he would be liable to me for heavy damages!"

She began pacing back and forth, raving, storming, and making futile threats. Pauline still stood by the door waiting until the woman should exhaust her rage.

"Did he tell you he had had a letter from me?" asked Miss Figlan, stopping suddenly.

"No. You wrote him?" Pauline asked in surprise.

"Of course, and he knows my handwriting. He knows you were telling the truth, but means to protect himself at all cost." She appeared no longer to doubt Pauline's word.

"I'm afraid he does," replied the girl. "He called it press stuff when I told him."

"That's what he means to call it."



"How dare you come here?" she asked, with ill-suppressed hate in her low-pitched tones.

Again Laura paced about, this time silently, thinking. "Well"—she stopped in the center of the room—"if he refuses to let you out, why did you come here and ask me to play the performance?"

"Because I can't go on. I mean to get out, to run away. The curtain must go up. There will be no one but you to play the performance. You could be revenged by refusing, but it's better business not to refuse. You can't afford to, in fact. My clothes will fit you; my maid will be there to help you. There need be no fuss, no disturbance about it."

"You mean that you want me to sneak into the theater and steal my place back again?" Miss Figlan stormed. "I'll see you and Gossman and the whole damned show in hell first! I'll go into that theater and play that performance as my right or not at all! What do you take me for? Do you think, because you are a thief, I am?"

Pauline's spirit cringed under the lash of her words, but she looked as proud as Miss Figlan herself.

"I've taken nothing from you that you wanted," she retorted haughtily. "You flung your contract away. I found it and used it. In return for the money that you didn't want, I've kept your name creditably before the public when you could not do so. For my own name, I have done nothing. All my work—good work, too—has been set down to your credit. I have not hurt, but helped, your reputation."

"They say Laura Figlan has grown finer, has more heart in her work!" laughed Miss Figlan bitterly. "The fools! I saw you act—yes, I paid two dollars to sit out in front and watch Laura Figlan act!" There was unutterable hatred in her face and voice. "It is an experience that perhaps no other actress ever had," she went on. "Bah! It was disgusting to watch your

crude imitations of my work!" Her sneering smile cut into the sensitive soul of the artist within Pauline, but her smile was as disdainful as Miss Figlan's own.

"I did not come here to discuss my work with you, Miss Figlan," said Pauline coldly, "or to make comparisons. The critics have done that," she finished significantly.

Miss Figlan flushed hotly.

"I have come," Pauline went on, "to ask you to take the place I have made possible for you and held open until you had need of it—the place you could not have taken had I not opened the play for you and kept it going successfully till you got here."

"Thank you, Miss— What's the name?" sneered the ex-star. "Do you mean to infer that I couldn't have got a production had I not found somebody usurping my place when I got here?"

"I mean just that," retorted Pauline, stung by her tone. "After the cool manner in which you shrugged a fifty-thousand-dollar production off your shoulders—sent it to the warehouse, and fifty thousand dollars' worth of advertising to the four winds—do you think you could have found an American producer willing to risk a production on you? Not only have I saved a production for you, but I have rescued your name from infamy. After this war is over, you will be able to prove beyond all question that you were having a successful run in America at the time when the interned wife of a German spy was trying to pass herself off for you."

That shot told. The woman's eyes wavered. She knew that here was indeed a way to recover her lost ground in England, where, as matters stood, she could never play again, but she answered sarcastically:

"All very good! And now what do you want for this great favor you have done me? What are your terms?"

"I want your signature to an agreement to be drawn up by my lawyers, in which you absolutely and completely release Mr. Gossman from all liability in this matter."

"Ha!" cut in the woman. "I thought there was a catch! So Gossman sent you! And he is afraid!"

"Mr. Gossman did not send me, and he is not afraid. On the contrary, he can furnish all sorts of proof of my identity as Laura Figlan. I am the only person in America who can help you to recover your place. Nobody else would be believed at all."

"And if I refuse to sign this paper?"

"Then I will refuse to assist in ruining Mr. Gossman, who, whatever he may know now, did not know in the beginning. I want to help you get back what is yours, but no more. I won't help you to be revenged on the man you would have cheated out of a hundred thousand dollars—revenged for my work of saving your name here and abroad."

"By God, you're clever!" Miss Figlan said, admiration coming into her once glorious eyes in spite of herself. The oath coming out so easily and quietly shocked Pauline. "You'll have me thanking you on my bended knees for dispossessing me, if I listen to you much longer!"

"Well, what is your answer? I'm tired of the argument. You know the terms. They're fair to everybody. Nobody is hurt by them—everybody helped—except myself," she ended sadly.

"Do you really believe for one minute," flared Miss Figlan, returning to her attitude of disdain, "do you really believe that I can't prove my identity—that I can't prove you an impostor—like that?" She snapped her fingers lightly.

"I know positively that my identity as Laura Figlan is already established and that your claims will be laughed

at, that no reputable lawyer would take your case, even."

Pauline saw her wince and knew that Gossman had been right, and that Laura Figlan had already failed in her efforts to find legal aid.

"It seems unbelievable," the girl went on, "but depositions can be got even from your own brother."

"My brother!"

"He was here only a few weeks ago," said Pauline quietly.

"And you dared to impose on him? You mean to tell me he didn't know?" shrieked the woman.

"He was here several days and, if called upon, he would swear that I am his sister."

"Why, if he came here, I could convince him in ten minutes!" laughed Miss Figlan.

"But he won't come here. He's enlisted, and can't come back to settle our little quarrel. He would have to go before a magistrate and swear that he had just spent several days with me at the Belmont and——"

"You devil!" cried Laura, the rage of a tigress in her voice and eyes. "You have even stolen my little brother!"

She made a leap for Pauline, who caught both her wrists. Drink, drugs, and hardships had made the woman a child in physical strength. Pauline, young and virile, held her easily.

"And when he told me good-by—" Pauline spoke calmly—"he said, 'Sis, you've been wonderful to me all my life, and no matter what you've done, I don't blame you, and I'm proud of you, proud as hell. But I'm proudest of all because you've quit drinking.'"

For one minute, Laura Figlan continued to stare at Pauline; then her face broke, her rigid form relaxed, and she burst into tears. Pauline let go of her wrists, and she ran to the bed and flung herself across it in a storm of weeping. Pauline followed her and

sat on the bed beside her without speaking. She knew she had touched the wellspring of all that was good and fine and tender in the nature of this woman who was as hard and bitter as the game she had beaten, and that had at the same time beaten her. If she had not cried in all the hideous months past, as Pauline suspected, the outlet would be good for her. Never had she seen anybody sob with such abandon.

"Little George!" the woman kept saying over and over.

After a while she got up and went over to the dresser and, watching Pauline furtively in the mirror, she took a small vial from a drawer. It was empty. She began a search in the top drawer, growing more nervous as she searched, tumbling things about furiously—becoming frantic. Without looking, Pauline saw the whole proceeding, and understood. A dope fiend, however clever in other ways, is curiously obvious in his efforts to hide his failing.

"You've been very fortunate in having such a brother," Pauline said, when the woman, failing in her search, again flung herself across the bed.

Miss Figlan sat up. Her pale-gold hair was tousled, her big eyes red, and her face streaked where the make-up she wore had washed off. Pauline turned her eyes away from the pitiable face that had once been so lovely.

"Yes, but otherwise I've had a hell of a life," replied the once great star, in a curiously subdued voice. All the anger seemed to have gone out of her, the hardness and bitterness. She sat there limply, drooping in every line, staring at the floor. "I've sold myself," she went on presently, "body and soul to get where I—am!" She laughed, and Pauline shuddered at the sound.

"Miss Figlan," said Pauline, "I know all that your life has been—hideous in some ways and wonderful in others.

And all you have suffered has been but the price of your genius. I don't believe it is possible to do great things without great suffering. And along with your suffering have gone glory and luxury and adulation—beautiful things, ease, and love. You had a mother who idolized you."

"She died when I was a mere girl. The only man I ever loved was murdered," put in Laura bitterly. All personal animus seemed gone from her. Her hands fluttered nervously.

"But you had him for your own. You still have George's love. For it is you and all that you have been to him that he loves—not me. You have had about everything that life has to offer one human being."

Miss Figlan turned her big, dark eyes on Pauline as if puzzled. And now it was the girl's turn to stare unseeingly at the carpet. They were a strange pair, those two sitting there on the bed together, so like and yet so different, with the difference that age and dissipation made in the one and youth and clean living in the other.

Laura Figlan, whose cleverness had always enabled her to see where her best advantages lay, realized fully that her fate rested in the hands of this girl who was, she knew, giving up everything that a woman and an actress most values, and with no hope of gain for herself. Still, she would have resented the very fact of their relative positions, she would have hated this girl on whose pleasure hung her present and future, but for the fact that Pauline had sent George away "proudest of all" for her. He would take that pride Over There. It would help to make a better soldier of him. This wiped out all petty resentment. She knew that, in actual fact, Pauline had not hurt her.

"You don't know what it is to have never felt that you—just you—were necessary to some one," Pauline went

on, "that you—just you—might be missed if suddenly you dropped out of life. You don't know what it means to be only one eight-hundredth part of a soul!"

"One eight-hundredth part of a soul!" exclaimed Miss Figlan in astonishment.

"Yes. Seems absurd, doesn't it? But that's all I am."

The woman stared at her.

"I was raised in an orphanage," Pauline said softly, "and there were eight hundred of us. Think of it! To be one of eight hundred—the eight-hundredth part of a great machine! Nobody on earth who has not been such a part can even faintly guess what that means to a child with a soul. And I had a soul—once."

"The deaconesses—'mothers' they were called—were good to us, as good as they could be to eight hundred little brats, all of different natures and dispositions. At least it is natural to suppose that they had been at one time of different natures."

"Were they strict?" Laura asked, moving restlessly.

"No more than was necessary. But how could you handle eight hundred children individually?"

She seemed to want to justify the system that had mothered her.

"We were taught to look to God for love. The mothers had not time. It would have taken the services of several mothers just to give each of us one kiss each morning. Then there was cooking, sewing, washing, ironing, mending, teaching, and much besides, to be done for us. Our material needs must be looked after."

"I was a great sinner in those days. I loved pretty clothes, like those I saw little girls in the streets wearing when we went begging. I hated the old clothes that kind ladies gave us; I hated begging for 'our Lord!' I wanted love that I could feel in kisses and squeezes,

such as ladies seemed, somehow, always moved to give little girls and boys they brought to see us. I even hated those well-fed, pampered children who could squeal in rage, stamp their feet, fight their mothers and one another, and shriek aloud, right within our very walls and before the very eyes of the mothers, who always smiled and often patted their heads.

"Small as I was, it seemed unfair to me, and I hated God for giving all I wanted to these shrieking little demons, and giving me only their old, worn-out clothes and the shame of the beggar's basket."

"I prayed constantly to our Lord to forgive my sins and give me pretty new clothes and some living person to love me. And the more I prayed, the more I hated Him because He never seemed to hear or care."

Miss Figlan shifted her position.

"One never-to-be-forgotten day, a young woman came in. She had on a lovely gown and her cheeks were very pink—like the cheeks one saw on wax ladies in the store windows. She gave the mothers a purse stuffed full of paper money, and they promised to pray God to forgive her sins."

"I stood quite near, and I saw the big tears come into her eyes as the mother said this; and a lump came up in my throat because I knew that our Lord was deaf and could not hear. I reached out my hand toward her skirt, then drew it back hastily, but she had seen me. She fell on her knees, not caring if she soiled her lovely dress, and threw her arms around me and cried and kissed me many times."

Miss Figlan was sitting up very straight.

"That was the first time I had cried since I could remember," Pauline mused. "I somehow found courage to ask the beautiful lady, right before the mother's eyes, if she had any little girls. When she said, 'No,' I whispered to her



"You mean you won't!" stormed Laura. "You don't want to. You snake! You white-livered liar! You want to ruin me!"

to take me. Then she cried more and said she couldn't—that she was a very bad lady and not fit to kiss me, even. So I kissed her, and we both cried some more. Then she went away.

"One day my beautiful lady sent me a picture postal card of herself. And I found out she was an actress. I kept her picture in my locker with my mother's picture and a little rag doll that some one had given me a long time before. We never talked about our little treasures, we only looked at them when we had time—mostly at night when we were ready for bed—and sometimes we took them to bed with us. One little girl had a letter that somebody had written her, and she handled it and read it and took it to bed with her until it was all worn out.

"And so passed sixteen years for me."

"So you were that little girl," said Laura Figlan in a low voice. "I never forgot you, though visiting orphanages was a sort of mania with me, as it is with many actresses. I suppose it is the vague stirring of the motherhood they shirk. They have ideas of adopting a child some day, and appease conscience by pretending to search for the child. I knew then that you looked like me and I wanted you, but I was selfish, and also, as I told you—unfit. I am glad I left you."

"But you led me to the stage," said Pauline. "I think I should never have thought of it, perhaps, if you had not been an actress. Will you forgive

me?" She was looking pleadingly into the old woman's eyes.

Miss Figlan got up abruptly and took several turns about the room. She had been growing more and more restless and excited all along.

"I guess it's you who ought to forgive me for leading you through the devil's door," she said presently. The hard note came back to her voice. "I'll sign that paper, because I've got to—and because I want to. I'm through, if I don't. I'm not sure but what I'm through anyhow. Look at me!" She went to the mirror and looked at herself, and sat down dejectedly.

"There are older women than you playing girl parts," replied Pauline wearily. "I'll go get the paper fixed up, and to-night you can go to the the-

ater veiled, and simply not show yourself until you make your entrance in the first act, when it will be too late."

Laura Figlan rose with Pauline. She hesitated a minute; then held out her hand.

"I haven't forgotten the little girl, but I've forgotten her name," she said. Her voice held a vagrant note of unaccustomed gentleness.

"Pauline," replied the girl, as she gave her hand.

"Thank you, Pauline—for several things, mostly for being the little girl, and for George. You know, though, that you aren't a better actress than I." Her haughtiness returned.

"Of course not." Pauline laughed at the indomitable vanity of the woman, though she felt in far from a laughing mood.

As she started to withdraw her hand, the star clung to it, a curious change coming over her. Her proud bearing had dropped away, and she appeared almost cringing.

"I—I— Will you do me a favor?" she said in a wheedling voice.

"What is it?" Pauline asked, astonished.

"I—I have a terrible headache—and my nerves are all shot to pieces. Would your mind getting me a little medicine? I'll tell you where to go." She finished her speech in a whisper.

"I can't. I haven't time," said Pauline, knowing what she wanted.

"But I can't play the performance without it," Laura pleaded. "Won't you do that for me, Pauline—little girl? I'm dreadfully ill, really. I'll do anything for you."

"Can't you get it?" Pauline asked huskily.

"No. The man I've been getting it from was—arrested—and—and I know another man who sells it—Dan Frawley—but I'd go to hell before I'd go to him for it! A woman I know has been getting it from him for me, but

I couldn't get hold of her this morning." She was wringing her hands now, and her eyes roved about. "What if I couldn't get her this afternoon? I couldn't play! I'm too sick! Please, Pauline! I'll give you his address. You can go to him. I'd kill myself before I'd do it!"

"Oh, Miss Figlan, I can't!" cried Pauline. "Anything else I can do——"

"But there isn't anything else!" The woman was holding herself together by a violent effort. "I'm all to pieces!" she whimpered. "All this has upset me so! Don't you see you ought to do this for me? It's you who have got me all to pieces," she added cunningly. She hunched her shoulders about piteously.

"I can't do it," said Pauline. "I can't."

"But you've got to," cried Laura, "if I am to play that performance! You don't want me to fail, do you?"

"Of course not."

"I believe you do!" snapped Laura, her eyes narrowing suspiciously, then blazing. "I know you do! You want to humiliate me before all New York, so you can come out and say who you are and show how much you are my superior!" She came toward Pauline menacingly. "You're a fool! My poorest work is better than your best! By God, I'll play that performance and show you up so that you'll be ashamed to raise your voice!" She was jerking all over.

Pauline turned to open the door. Laura grabbed her.

"Please," she whined in sudden change, "don't go like that! Oh, my God, you don't know what it is to want that damned stuff!" She threw off the subterfuge of medicine. "Won't you get it for me? I'm just about crazy! I've got to have it! I didn't mean what I said. You're a splendid actress, and you've been fine in every way about everything—finer than I ever would

have been! Don't spoil it by refusing me this! You are so wonderful!"

Pauline turned sick. This proud woman reduced to a crawling thing for dope!

"You will get it for me, won't you, Pauline—my little girl?" She was rubbing her hands over Pauline's arm. She ran to the dresser and got a slip of paper. "Here's the address. But don't tell him who it is for. That would do him too much good."

"Miss Figlan, I can't do it!" cried Pauline in a tone of finality. "I simply can't!"

"You mean you won't!" stormed Laura. "You don't want to. You snake! You white-livered liar! Pretending you wanted to do what was right! You want to ruin me!" Her rage grew. "I ought to have known there was a nigger in the woods! I never saw anybody do anything yet that was really for the other fellow! Well, I'll not fail! You and your thieving manager have overshot your mark! Now get out of my rooms! You thief! You liar!"

With maniacal eyes, she jerked the door open and thrust Pauline out.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE AUGUST NUMBER.



THE WORD

SMALL words and long words,
All words are the same,
All the words in all the world
Except your name.

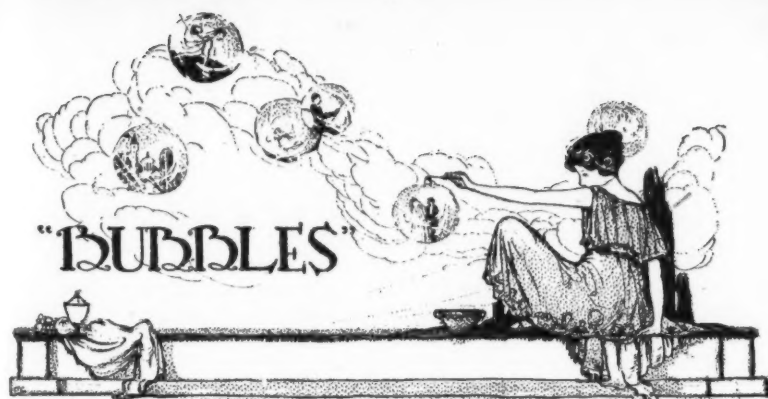
That is a strange word,
A magic word and wild.
To hear it makes a king of me,
A hero, a child.

That is an iron word
With terror in its ring.
It makes a trembling in me
Like no other thing.

That is a soft word;
It is like a hand laid
Upon a head in sickness.
It makes me afraid.

Let me hear the cruel words,
The words of bliss or blame,
The wild words, the kind words,
But not—your name.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.



THE female of the human species is the only kind that can be thrilled by the written word of her mate, a thousand miles away, and cold to the kisses on her lips.

Memory has such long arms that they reach from the grave to the cradle.

Many a woman who shudders over the thought of a man convicted of crime on circumstantial evidence never hesitates to condemn a child unheard.

Many a woman gowned like a bird of Paradise has a voice like a parrot and a soul like a humming bird.

The sun kissed her and the waves embraced her, but her lover was jealous of neither. The sun is a million miles away, and the waves, once they pass, never return.

Even pretty nurses have their troubles. It's hard to keep a patient in a cheerful frame of mind after refusing to marry him, and the average nurse cares for twenty-five patients a year.

Will the helpless, clinging-vine type of woman be the 1919 model? What else can she be in a skirt thirty-two inches wide around the bottom?

If some girls practiced politeness as faithfully as they do music, their friends would be better pleased.

Many a woman trusts a friend with a secret she cannot keep herself.

Some people think of friendship as an umbrella to be used in stormy weather.

Foods *and* Family Health in Summer

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

IN the prevention of waste and the conservation of food lies the economic value of the householder, but above and beyond all this is the great question of health. So the responsibility of the home maker seems to have increased a thousandfold, or are we just beginning to appreciate that the chief consideration of our women is how best to husband their resources in order to maintain their households at a minimum cost? Heretofore, this knowledge has not interested any except those specially trained in this direction; in fact the buying, storing, and handling of food with respect to its preservation in a healthy condition in the home is a comparatively recent study.

There are three things that render the best food unfit for use and regarding which the average woman knows very little. These are yeasts, molds, and bacteria. These microscopic and small living things are found everywhere and seem especially drawn to the food used by man. They flourish in kitchen, storeroom, ice box, milk room, and cellar, and are the living particles which cause the spoiling of food and the consequent waste, so serious a problem at the present moment. While many of these minute forms of life are harmless, some even being beneficial—

such as the bacteria that ripens milk—many are harmful and are a direct cause of disease.

Molds, yeast, and bacteria may be found in the cleanest room, but they flourish in vast numbers in dirt, especially in organic matter—food particles—that is dust laden. Not only do microorganisms appropriate our food, with the result that it sours, rots, or putrifies, but they leave disagreeable traces in musty and moldy odors and flavors in the food they have thus spoiled. Sometimes they cause chemical changes in it which we are unable to detect and which give rise to alkaloids called ptomaines and leucomaines, which, when taken into the body, give rise to grave disorders and even death.

Most forms of microscopic life destructive to food grow best in warmth and moisture. A familiar example of mold is mildew. Every housekeeper can recognize the appearance of this fungus on bread, cheese, and other everyday articles of food. It is always at work in damp cellars, dark and damp corners, and closets. It is borne on the feet of insects, on the skin of fruits, and in the dust flying in the air.

There are also many varieties of mold, and they flourish best in foods piled high together, leaving small un-

disturbed air spaces, and in moisture. When fruits touch one another, the point of contact is likely to be more moist than the rest of the fruit and becomes a favorite place for the starting of mold and other growths. If the skin is perfectly firm and all extraneous matter has been carefully wiped off with a clean cloth, the fruit wrapped in soft paper and put away in a cool place, it will remain fresh and sweet indefinitely and will dry out rather than spoil. Otherwise, its decay is certain.

When children are permitted to eat fruits and other foods that have been touched with mold and have begun to rot, they are taking just so much harmful food into the system which is an extra tax upon the bodily functions to dispose of. It weakens their resisting qualities to actual infectious processes, a danger that childhood is never free from.

For this and other very good reasons, food of the first quality only should be given to children. Fruit especially must be sound and ripe. If the skin has been washed and wiped dry, it can be eaten with benefit, not only to the teeth, but as an aid to the digestive processes and to the peristaltic action of the intestines. Otherwise, all decay, specks, and skin should be carefully removed, the fruit cut into sections, and only such portions used as have escaped the action of these organisms.

In dealing with all varieties of microscopic life, we have learned that the all-important thing is to prevent them from getting a start. Their growth, once begun, is a difficult thing to arrest. The first requisite, then, is absolute cleanliness. This is not to be attained by the use of soap and water alone. Fresh air, sunshine, and whitewash are important aids. Shelves should be washed clean and then dried, but the undue use of water is to be avoided, as moisture favors the growth of mold

and other undesirable microscopic and insect life.

A cellar may be kept dry by placing in it dishes of unslacked lime, which takes up the moisture with avidity. When the lime crumbles apart, losing entirely its crystalline character, it becomes "slacked," will take up no more water, and must be renewed. The growth of most molds is retarded by light, ventilation, and low temperature. Light and ventilation are important. The right degree of cold for each different product has been studied experimentally and a knowledge of low temperature in relation to the growth of bacteria and fungi forms the basis of the cold-storage industry.

It is said that the numbers of bacteria are in direct relation to the density of population. We cannot get away from them except by going into the highest mountains or into the polar regions, but we can protect our food supply from their undue growth by reversing all the conditions that they require for their development. They must not be allowed to get their start. Hence, only such foods should be bought as are in the freshest and best possible condition.

The temperature at which food is kept should be reduced to that best suited to it, which is usually as near the freezing point as possible. A good ice box will keep food for days in a perfect condition. Cool, clean storage is as important for many cooked foods as for raw.

PLANNING THE SUMMER DIETARY.

Each year, with the advent of warm weather, the conscientious housewife is confronted with the problem of arranging and devising a dietary that is at once appealing, appetizing, and healthful. In former years, we knew painfully little about the action and digestion of foods, to say nothing of their nutritional value. We were wasteful

of precious material and ignorant of the simplest dietetics, and we have only latterly learned that a remarkable state of health and beauty can be acquired by indulging in a simplicity instead of a multiplicity of foods. So much is being said on this subject just now that we are in danger of going to the other extreme and being too frugal, too sparing. It must be remembered that life as expressed in genuine health is dependent upon a proper food supply—that is, upon a properly nourished body—and that the body reflects the character of the food it ingests.

The physical sins of overindulgence are as glaring as those of under feeding. Both must be guarded against, and especially in warm weather, since during this season the appetite becomes capricious, the digestion is apt to be sluggish, and the bodily functions in general are lowered in tone. Our first object must be to provide food that is appetizing. Food that appeals to the eye usually appeals to the taste. Too much stress cannot be laid upon clean, fresh foods of the first quality.

A summer dietary is made up largely of field and garden products. These must be washed repeatedly in running water to free them from insects, fertilizers, and other deleterious matter. Atmospheric conditions alter the condition of food very rapidly; therefore, it should be prepared in amounts suitable for immediate consumption. It is wise not to economize with "left-overs" unless they are very stable articles of diet; these must be protected from flies and other extraneous influences. Flies are notorious disease carriers; they not only inoculate uncovered food with disease germs, but taint it with other poisons.

The ptomaines and leucomaines which give rise to so much painful alimentary disturbance in warm weather are not disease germs, as is commonly supposed, but poisonous alkaloids cre-

ated in foods by putrefactive changes. These are chemical conditions due to electrical and other atmospheric variations, sometimes to disease breeders.

Food, then, concerning the absolute freshness and cleanliness of which there is the slightest doubt had better be cast aside, and so ptomaine poisoning and other allied conditions of the alimentary tract can be avoided. Odors and gases that collect in the food chest or refrigerator are exceedingly harmful, besides destroying the flavor and freshness of foods put there to be preserved. Scrupulous cleanliness of the ice box does not always insure its sweetness, as these receptacles are usually so placed that they cannot be properly aired; they must, therefore, be disinfected. A simple and efficacious means to this end is a lump of sulphur burned inside the chest. The food, of course, is removed and the door closed. If this prevention is taken every day, there is very little danger of food spoiling in the ice chest.

A remarkable thing about the human body is its maintenance of an even temperature—when in a state of health—despite every variation in climate and season. We lose heat rapidly in cold weather and must, therefore, be supplied with certain foods the combustion—digestion—of which generates heat. In summer, when atmospheric temperature is usually as high or higher than that of the body, very little heat is given off.

In hot climates, the natives live mainly upon vegetables and fruits; whereas, in the arctic regions, enormous quantities of animal flesh and fat are consumed. This explains why a diet containing little meat and foods classed with meat is advisable in warm weather. Such alimentation supplies more heat than the body requires at this time of the year. The accumulation of heavy food in the sluggish digestive tract materially hampers digestion

and, principally, assimilation, thus giving rise to untold bodily disturbances, not the least of which is fermentative indigestion, a frequent complaint of children during the heated term.

Even in summer, the body requires some protein food to sustain it, and in this class, besides meat, are all dairy products—buttermilk, cheese, eggs, sweet milk; legumes—lentils, peas, peanuts, nuts of all kinds; and sea foods. From this list it will be seen that it is quite possible to include a variety of protein foods in the daily dietary without using meats of any kind. In this connection, it will not be amiss to say a word on the economic side of food stuffs, for the cost does not by any means run concurrently with their nutritive value. Two quarts of milk give all the protein requirements for a day, while a pound loaf of wheat bread with milk gives slightly more nourishment than we need. The great difference in cost, as compared to expensive cuts of meat, is obvious. The food values of a menu are tremendously increased when whole wheat is used. In this country, we seem wedded to white flour, and thereby discard the chief nourishment contained in wheat. Three-fourths of the minerals—necessary elements for the growth and proper development of the body and its varied functions—are discarded. Chickens, guinea pigs, and monkeys fed on whole wheat thrive, but when put on an exclusive white-flour diet, die.

The use of fine whole-meal flours in bread and biscuit insures proper muscular activity and supplies the body with important salts. These meals are also more easily digested than highly refined white flour, while the bran they contain stimulates peristalsis and keeps the alimentary contents moving along.

Now while protein foods form an essential part of any well-planned dietary, other foods are equally necessary and valuable—those that cool the blood,

that satisfy the appetite, and that cleanse the body. Of these we fortunately possess, in the vegetable kingdom, a great variety, including lettuce, dandelion, carrot, parsnip, turnip, celery, string bean, asparagus, corn, squash, beet, spinach, eggplant, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, watercress, cabbage, radish, and onion.

Many of these can be eaten to advantage in the raw state. Uncooked food has been advocated by some fad-dists in cases of obesity, and is now more than a fad because of its greater economic value. It is a good thing to give it a trial in hot weather. The mineral salts contained in most greens are usually abstracted during the process of cooking. What remains contains little of value, but acts, by its bulk, as a mechanical stimulant to peristalsis. This of course should not be the only function of any food. Raw greens cool the blood and act as a "broom to the stomach," sweetening and cleaning all the fluids of the body.

Fruit oil, fruit juice, and greens are three supreme cleansing and corrective foods for children of all ages. Chopped watercress, mustard and cress, lettuce, tender sorrel, nasturtium leaves, spring onions, the inner stalks of celery, fresh, juicy radishes, and the hearts of Brussels sprouts and of Savoy cabbages, supply a variety of delicate flavors that will appeal to any palate. One hard-boiled egg worked into a salad containing one or more of these greens, dressed with olive oil, tomato or lemon juice, and a very little salt, will stimulate the most jaded appetite. Foods that are roasted too much or baked and boiled too much are hard on the kidneys. Nature's methods of ripening and preparing foods for the palate should be studied in planning and carrying out this dietary.

In addition to these delightful greens—and those sensible enough to plant a garden of their own can possess a salad

patch which each day yields its welcome supply—are the great variety of fruits so prodigally provided for us during the summer. Acidulated drinks from genuine, not artificial, fruit juices are beneficial. Gooseberries and currants eaten without sugar supply the body with juices and small seeds that are highly cleaning and sweetening.

It is well to remember the old adage regarding apples—"Golden in the morning, silver at noon, and lead at night." Apples, unless chewed to a pulp, require three and one-half hours to digest. Baked, they are above reproach, being savory and wholesome; served

with sugar and cream, they form a very healthful and satisfying breakfast dish.

A summer's dietary, then, should consist of food that is of the first quality, absolutely clean and fresh, containing little meat, but a sufficient quantity of dairy products, green vegetables, and fruits, with bread made from whole wheat and bran flour. A simplification of foods, with thorough mastication, insures a more healthful appetite and a sturdier digestion.

In providing this dietary for the younger generation, we become our own converts.

WHAT READERS ASK

MRS. C. B.—You say, "What would you advise?" You are suffering from autointoxication caused by chronic constipation. While gastro-intestinal affections are almost always responsible for cutaneous eruptions, it is a well-known fact that chronic pelvic trouble invariably causes discoloration of the skin. It is highly probable that all of these conditions arise in your case from chronic constipation. Do you not realize that the skin blemishes are only an outer indication of inner disturbances? I doubt very much if mild bleaches, such as lemon juice or peroxide of hydrogen, will benefit you. You need an arsenical bleach. The formula for this I never publish. You will have to send me a stamped and self-addressed envelope for it. An astringent wash faithfully applied, after making the toilet of the face, will gradually reduce enlarged pores. Here is a simple astringent wash: Boric acid, two drams; alcohol, two ounces; rose water, four ounces. Now, an article was published in the last November issue of this magazine entitled "Intestinal Sluggishness." If you take the magazine regularly, you must have seen it, and yet you failed to apply to yourself the symptoms outlined and the skin conditions described. This article would have helped you, as it has many others who write and tell me so. The diet and exercises are just what you need to overcome your constipated habit, and it is likely that your other troubles will also yield, once you have overcome the main cause of all your evil. If you have

failed to keep the number containing this article, you can procure a copy by sending your order, with 20 cents, to the business office. I urge you to do this.

MRS. K. H. M.—No, I do not approve of face steaming. Use hot towels to open the pores; then apply a cleansing cream to remove all the exudate which this treatment brings out. Repeat the applications several times, until the grease is no longer discolored, but comes from the face as clean as it went on; then apply your massage cream and rub in accordance with the character of your tissues and the effect you wish to produce. Haphazard massage does more harm than good. One precept, however, must always be remembered, and that is to rub up, never down. I will be pleased to send you special formula for face creams on personal application.

MRS. X.—A perfumed talcum powder for general use is made of powdered talc, one pound; extract of jasmine, three-quarters ounce; extract of musk, one-quarter ounce; oil of rose, eight drops. Mix all thoroughly and put in sprinkler-topped jars.

MIRIAM.—You require a light bleach for the removal of transient or "summer" freckles. Lemon juice and peroxide of hydrogen are examples of such a bleach. Stronger measures to overcome freckles and the discoloration that results from sunburn will gladly be mailed to you.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

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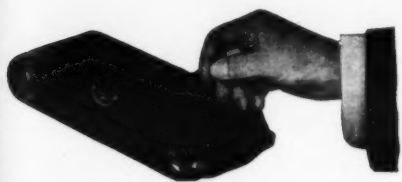
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The date on the Film

In just a few years you will ask:

This picture of John, was it made before or after the war?
And this of little Mary taking her first toddling steps—how old
was she then?

How those snap-shots, made on our trip to the Yellowstone
bring it all back to us, except the date,—when *did* we go?

Grandmother before the fireplace with her knitting, growing
old gently and gracefully—how old was she? It is so annoying
not to remember.

Time plays the mischief with memory—but with the *date on
the film* you may laugh at his tricks. All folding Kodaks and
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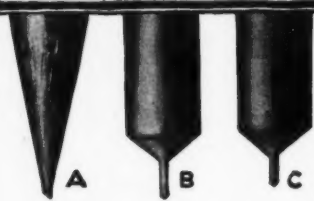
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